

SPEAKING IN AN ALIEN VOICE: A
WOMANIST COMPARISON OF THE USE OF
LANGUAGE BY SCOTTISH AND WEST
AFRICAN FEMALE PLAYWRIGHTS.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores specific thematic pre-occupations in the works of selected eight women writers from two different geographical and cultural milieus (West Africa and Scotland) with a specific focus on similarities in which these writers use language as a means of exploring women's positions within their respective societies. The second layer of the study's enquiry lives within the realm of exploration of womanist discourse, as originally developed by Alice Walker, and a possibility of applying this discourse beyond African American and African shores, as a transracial and transcultural model for creating new readings of dramatic discourse by women writers who come from different generational, racial, cultural and geographical environments.

In total, sixteen plays ranging from 1970 to 2008 have been examined by means of close reading and comparative analysis, and against the backdrop of Alice Walker's womanist theory. The study's focus has been on the ways in which language is employed in these plays to develop womanish characters, to use Walker's term, capable of overcoming limitations of their position in societies that confine and silence them within domestic realms.

This study shows that while womanist theory per se may be seen as confined to African American discourse, some of its elements such as audaciousness, community, spirituality and capability may find successful application in such two different cultural models as West Africa and Scottish shores.

KEY WORDS: Feminism, Womanism, Assertiveness, Language, Scottish women writers, West African women writers, Alice Walker.

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Introduction

The instability of gender and language categories used in dramatic works may become apparent in the tensions between the ways in which women writers use their writing to redress female identities and their status in society. Since the 1970s, numerous feminist discourses have offered theoretical frameworks concerning the roles of women and their position in society, variously based on socio-cultural, historio-political, linguistic and ethnic factors. All of these perspectives have factored in acquiring a better understanding of gender relations and social (in)equalities in western and non-western societies. The aforementioned discourses have inspired some female writers and critics to use writing to represent their gender, class, culture, and the society. While an examination of this discourse may be a strong starting point of the study, there are other things to consider such as feminist or womanist approaches to characterisation and language use, an analysis of which may offer a better understanding of women's literature in general and women's writing for stage in particular. One of the reoccurring preoccupations in women's writing is the issue of female creativity that Adrienne Rich's *The Dream of a Common Language* (1979) explores in terms of how linguistic expression is attributed to female characters.

This study is largely influenced by womanism, as originally defined in 1984 book *In Search of Our Mother's Garden: Womanist Prose* by African American novelist Alice Walker. However, it also questions the viability of the theory as a doctrine and its universality. As she seeks to rescue the marginalised woman from negative and

inaccurate stereotypes that mask her in the feminist discourse, Walker's four-partite definition of womanism remains problematic:

. . . the black folk expression of mothers to female children, you acting womanish, i.e. like a woman. . . usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous, or wilful behaviour. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered 'good' for one. . . (A womanist is also) a woman who loves other women sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture . . . and women's strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or nonsexually . . . committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist . . . Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender" (xi-xii).

Walker depicts the potential for the oppressed in the society to grow out of their situation. Her four-partite definition seems to suggest multiple uses of womanism. These multiple uses are very different, but all of them have a common denominator – they show a link with black women's past in relation to their gender and race. They also serve as visionary theory that seeks to help black women to enter feminist discourse. Walker's comparison of womanism and feminism may be seen as a way of fostering interracial association amongst women of different categories.

As this study explores the works of women writers from different continents using Walker's definition of womanish girls, it helps to focus on language use which has been partly informed by Rich's observation. This argues for female voices to be seen as important tools for change by which women writers question the pre-1970s writers' use of their writing as a way of silencing women within society. Hence, the first theme that this study proposes to explore is how female writers use their writing to define women, from characterisation of their female protagonists to engagement with different themes, issues, and cultures. While many critics of female discourses

have noted that women's creativity reinforces certain established ideas of women's status in society, this study aims to show, based on a sample of female authors who belong to different generations, race and cultural backgrounds, that female authors present female characters as radical and active agents for change. This study aims to show different ways in which the women's texts construct gendered language may serve as both oppressive tools and a mode of resistance. It seeks to provide evidence that women's creative writing in general and dramatic writing in particular, builds and maintains the notion of the aesthetic of assertiveness as an extension and a critique of Alice Walker's womanist theory. One may argue that women's writings are explorations of what it is to be a woman from a female perspective. The writers discussed in this study, and their female characters as created on the page and embodied on stage, become in a way mouthpieces for their own stories through which the authors are able then to redress traditional and contemporary themes, communal memories and experiences and socially, culturally and gender induced issues.

Mary Ellmann (1968) claims that female authors have always been constrained to write in line with what she calls 'phallic criticism'¹, Furthermore, they face the scrutiny of female readers, critics and audiences who focus on the relationship between thought, voice and character. K.K Ruthven identifies in *Feminist Literary Studies: An Introduction* (1990) that to read a canonical text in a feminist way is to force that text to reveal its hidden sexual ideology which tends not to be mentioned in non-feminist criticism (31). Ruthven's observation also applies to womanist theory

¹Ellmann defines phallic criticism in *Phallic Criticism: Thinking about Women* (1968) as a tendency in females' writers writing to want the approval of male critics.

which shows a way of deconstructing the canon, and allows the feminist/womanist readers to examine the ideologies behind literary phenomena.

For Walker, however, womanist readings go beyond a simple rereading of texts. They aim to rediscover and reassess women's writings in a variety of historic, artistic and aesthetic contexts. The womanist critics offer female readers a fresh critical approach, where focus is put the issues such as mother-daughter empathy that have been long neglected by traditional critics. This allows them the opportunity of explore the situation of the womanist daughter facing the consequences of her actions. While such a view is explored in some of the selected works discussed in the following chapters, womanism provokes female readers into seeing one's gender as a product of arbitrary cultural differentiations imposed upon sexes to support the unequal distribution of power.

The American critic Elaine Showalter observes in *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists* (1978) those women's variegated lives and duties produce different content in their literary work, but that there are enough features in common to formulate a specific tradition. She goes further to argue that when people look at women writers collectively, they can see imaginative continuation, the recurrence of certain patterns, themes, problems and images from generation to generation (14).

Although concurring with Showalter's observation and a little doubtful of Walker's assertion of audaciousness, the study wishes to identify the potential of women's writings to recreate female stereotypes as a tool for analysis of socio-cultural representations of women's oppression in society. The plays are also a vehicle to create female characters who are able to resist such oppression. While these women

writers present themselves as narrators, observers and mediators, they ultimately become actively involved in the recreation of the female gender and in the narrative of emancipation in which knowledge is celebrated as a means of liberation.

One of the expectations of female readers is to see new writing and reading collectives, female characters who can effect the necessary changes that society has denied them, by realising fellow women's experiences as socio-cultural and socio-biological art. This mirrors Mabel Ekwierhoma's idea in *Female Empowerment and Dramatic Creativity in Nigeria* (2003) that a woman who encounters a text by another woman authenticates that creativity and narration are not alien to women, because in history women "have also told the important stories of our culture" (Showalter, 1986:3) (18). Although Showalter's idea may be valid, especially as means of including female readers in the historical analysis of female writers, Ekwierhoma's view is perhaps less convincing, as it ignores the readers who see the themes embedded in more biased or traditional writings as uncultured, unsocial and unfeminine.

Spoken language is less able to interpret the whole of human experience than the body, which could be one of the reasons that a lot of women performers prefer to embody ideas through movement as opposed to the spoken or written word. To many of selected women writers, written or spoken voice is probably the weakest means of communication as words are social constructs that enable society to control individuals. With this study's awareness that a woman's voice has been a powerful metaphor in drama, heralding the ways in which women have been denied the rights or given an opportunity to express themselves freely within the patriarchal society,

the crux of the analysis is on the ways in which dramatic language is used as recuperative paradigm of recovering lost, silenced, misunderstood and devalued women's voices.

The ability to use one's voice with clarity, precision and vividness has not only been questioned by sociolinguists but by the selected writers in this study as well. This seems to show the extent to which the way one speaks can be ineffective irrespective of gender, but it is common among the female gender that their voice is solely defined against the view of the norm. Based upon the analysis of the work by the selected group of female authors, the study explores how creative writings can aid to gaining of or losing one's voice, status, public recognition, equality, and a model of female identity. If one accepts that language and culture are interwoven in creativity, it cannot be ignored that the writers' work is shaped by the correlation of these two concepts. This study is particularly interested in examining the ways in which dramatic writing by female authors is used as a mechanism of socio-cultural silencing, and, paradoxically, its potential to recover and reassess alternative forms of women's creative expression. Dale Spender points out in *Man Made Language* (1980) that:

people who have the power to use language advantageously have the potential to order the world to suit their own ends, the potential to construct a language, a reality, a body of knowledge in which they are central figures, the potential to legitimate their own primacy, and to create a system of beliefs which is beyond challenge . . . (97).

This seems to apply to women writers who have the ability to redress their situation through the use of language in the characterisation they give to their individual

female characters. Such writings do not only serve to correct the low self-esteem; it also has a potential to erase the negative identity that the female gender has been associated with traditionally. The study of how women construct other women through a variety of writing styles has a long history and it demonstrates that characters are constructed in different ways and for a different function in dramatic and other creative writing based on their writers' understanding of gender performance. For example, in most of the selected plays from West Africa and Scotland, the male characters are handed social recognition and advantages. Deborah Cameron notes in *Verbal Hygiene* (1995) that linguistic rules and standards of 'correct speech' reveal information about patterns of power and privilege in society. In this sense, women writers from different cultural backgrounds share their concern about the ways in which women are (re)presented in verbal and spoken language.

Through engaging in a comparative analysis of themes, imagery and voices given to (or taken from) their characters, in a select sample of West African and Scottish plays by female authors, Walker's claim at universality of womanist theory has been discussed and questioned in these authors' plays in text and, where available and appropriate, in performance. Most of the plays that are studied here have been published and performed, and this makes it possible to explore whether or not any change has occurred in the way women's status and opportunities, as defined by womanist theory, have altered through time, and in different cultural templates. While it is this author's intention to downplay postcolonial reading of the texts, it is worth pointing out that gender, culture and race are intrinsically and inevitably interwoven. The plays chosen for analysis were published between 1960 and 2008. This temporal frame was chosen for its potential to point towards any potential shift

in how language used by these writers is representative of social behaviour that unmasks specific emotions, attitudes and roles. The plays under scrutiny are Ama Ata Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1974) and *Anowa* (1970), Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods* (1973) and *Song of a Maiden* (1991), Marcella Evaristi's *Commedia* (1983) and *Mouthpieces* (1980), Efua Sutherland's *Edufa* (1987) and *The Marriage of Anansewa* (1987), Sue Glover's *The Seal Wife* (2008) and *Bondagers* (1995), Julie Okoh's *Edewede* (2000) and *Mannequins* (1997), Rona Munro's *Iron* (2002) and *Bold Girls* (1991), Liz Lochhead's *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* (in further text: *MQS*) (1989) and *Educating Agnes* (2008).

The decision to look at West African and Scottish women's dramatic writings seems to reveal more similarities than differences, both in the ways in which these female authors construct gender in their stories, and in the way in which they give voice to their female protagonists. What it boils down to is Showalter's and Ekwierhoma's suggestions that women write culture, past, present and future. In other words, women's writing does not only express past memories, both cultural and socio-political, but also has a possibility to shape or alter the society's future.

Here, sixteen plays by eight female authors have been examined in seven chapters in which the writers' use of dramatic language has been explored through the prism of womanist theory.

Chapter one of this study analyses woman writers in relation to culture, class and language which is mostly influenced by the societal view of gender. It considers the female gender and female creativity through the eight selected writers' representations of female characters who use language to show the powerful and

powerless situations they occupy within a patriarchal society. The chapter offers rationale why womanism has been chosen as a theoretical framework and it introduces the notion of the aesthetic of assertiveness. While exploring some aspects of womanism as a framework, the study seeks to justify the choice of theoretical framework and to explain why only some of the aspects of womanism have been explored in relation to the authors' choice of themes and characterisation, such as audaciousness, female creativity, assertiveness, and sisterhood amongst the others. It also seeks to explain why the plays from two very different cultural, racial and historical milieus might prove to bear closer similarities than initially anticipated.

Chapter two reviews the existing literature about womanism, language, gender and the position of women in society. It further discusses the study's methodological framework and structural complexities that identify the study's argument as two-fold. On the one hand, the study proposes to look at the ways in which women write to express gender issues. On the other hand, it examines whether or not womanist theory may be applied across national, racial, linguistic and socio-cultural boundaries. The follow-up chapters focus on comparison between West African and Scottish female writers' plays in order to discuss if Walker's womanism could indeed be applied beyond the shores of Africa.

Chapter three discusses the victims of identity crisis in the light of socio-cultural and womanist points of view. It draws on Showalter's cultural position, culture and gender assertiveness in its analysis of Ama Ata Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost* and *Anowa* and Liz Lochhead's *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* and *Educating Agnes*. While both writers recognise that the society is a valuable source

of acquiring language, they also show the underlying problems of women in power. Aidoo and Lochhead integrate historical pageant and tragedy to explore themes of bigotry, rivalry, sexism, court intrigue and human nature and re-examine histories. Many of their female characters such as Mary, Elizabeth, Anowa, Agnes and Eulalie are damaged through being made victims while they try to learn how to use power discourses to their advantage. This reflects Robin Lakoff's suggestion in *Who Are These Men Talking About* (1998) that:

. . . a girl is damned if she does, damned if she does not. If she refuses to talk like a lady, she is ridiculed and subjected to criticism as unfeminine; If she does learn, she is ridiculed as unable to think clearly, unable to take part in a serious discussion; in some sense, as less than fully human. These two choices which a woman has- to be less than a woman or less than a person- are highly painful (243).

Lakoff believes that women's use of language discourse renders them misunderstood, the 'other'. While Aidoo engages in a deliberate attempt to use traditional oral forms to explore the pre- and post-independence Ghanaian society, Lochhead demonstrates that linguistic diversity correlates with cultural diversity. For example, Anowa's decision in Aidoo's *Anowa* that she should marry the man of her choice and move to another town is seen as a socio-cultural taboo amongst her people. Similarly, in Lochhead's *Educating Agnes*; Agnes's behaviour in her rejection to marry her benefactor places her at a precarious position from which she is saved only by a fortunate set of circumstances. Although Chapter three focuses on analysis of Lochhead's adaptation of Moliere's seventeenth century comedy *School for Wives*, parallels with the original text are inevitable and have been briefly mentioned in the course of analysis as appropriate.

Chapter four explores the ideology of silence and audibility in characterisation of female protagonists in Julie Okoh's *Edewede* and *Mannequins* and Sue Glover's *The Seal Wife* and *Bondagers*. The issue of power and powerlessness becomes centre focus in these plays, and silence is presented as not necessarily a negative trait; it can also be used as an assertive tool. While some of the plays discuss how being shut out of human dialogue, being silenced, isolated and spoken for by others means being denied identity, in *The Seal Wife* the otherness of Rona exemplifies her true nature and challenges traditional norms and codes of behaviour.

In 1980 Dale Spender wrote *Man Made Language* in which she suggested that men dominate women by excluding them from the discourse of power. Okoh and Glover depict female characters who refuse to be victims of a patriarchal society through linguistic behaviour that could either be identified as silent and womanly, or aggressive and manly, therefore making language a 'powerful' tool to aid these characters as they transgress or take control of the domestic arena to enter the public sphere. Luce Irigaray identifies in *Democracy Begins Between Two* (1994) that the way for women to be audible and liberated is not by becoming a man or by envying what the men have but by appreciating femalehood, female subjects valuing the expression of their own sex and gender (122). In plain terms, women need to appreciate their positions not in a passive way, but as a way of creating a variety of recognisable identities for themselves. However, when women express themselves through such an avenue, it depicts their self-articulation and self-determination through aesthetics of assertiveness. For instance, in Glover's *The Seal Wife* (1980) Rona rejects the family life that she sees as sacrificial, oppressive and limiting. Rona's characterisation is a strong metaphor for the 'nature versus nurture' concept.

In Chapter five, dynamism of self-expression and choice is discussed in Efua Sutherland's *Edufa* and *The Marriage of Anansewa* and Marcella Evaristi's *Mouthpieces* and *Commedia*, as the pattern continues to emerge regarding further examination of the concept of female psyche and Walker's idea of emotional capabilities in these plays. Both Sutherland and Evaristi create characters who have to face the consequences of their actions, none of which enables them to achieve equality, as patriarchal system gives them only two choices – between silence and audibility, love and hate, submission and aggression. As both writers use vernacular as an avenue through which the two genders are coerced into subjectivity, the female and the male characters are unable to see themselves as being excluded from the whip of language and denied what Cameron (1992) sees as 'languages of power' (198) and for this reason female characters are unable to maximise any personal or social control.

Chapter six explores the ways in which this could be altered by introducing the idea of an aesthetic of assertiveness. This then becomes the axis of a comparative analysis of Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods* and *Song of a Maiden* and Rona Munro's *Bold Girls* and *Iron*. Although the aesthetic of assertiveness features in previous chapters up to a point, this chapter discusses women's boldness, and the repercussions of breaking of the taboos that have limited women's ability to see and act beyond the limitations of society. While this analyses the beauty of being a woman, it also explores the contradictions of motherhood, mother/child relationships, and women's determination to her right to choose despite any social or gender-related discrimination.

Unlike the female aesthetics of the 1970s that call for the return of mother tongue and a genderlect of women's speech in their writings, the writers see their use of different languages as a search for national identity, which can be used to eliminate women's stereotypes and belittlement that tend to be a crucial part of their cultural identity and eventual self-assertion. These writers see a woman as a whole being and not a fragmented part in their portrayal of different female characters who are either able to confront their situations or avoid the situations. As Maria Black and Rosalind Coward observe in *The Feminist Critique of Language* (1998) that females are often regarded in sexual categories such as whore, slag, mother, virgin, sister, daughter, housewife, amongst others; these female characters show that women can be active, independent and relevant. Although references will be made to this assertion by Black and Coward, this will be in their use of assertive modes of expression to depict female aesthetics. It also explores how woman's ability to describe female body image and physical capabilities, according to Showalter and Walker, are used by Sofola and Munro to question their respective cultures' perceptions of sex and identity. Such aesthetics of assertiveness makes women courageous, sincere and allows them self-fulfilment without anybody infringing on their personal rights.

The conclusion offers detailed recount of the study's research outcomes in its attempt to answer the question whether or not womanist theory can provide a framework for re-evaluation and re-interpretation of the work of the selected West African and Scottish female writers in particular and writers from different cultural traditions in general. Also, this chapter reiterates similarities between the ways in which female writers from West Africa and Scotland use language to explore women's roles and position in the social hierarchy as well as to expose the phallocentric nature and

gender inequalities that still exist in the respective societies. This chapter aims to show the relevance and applicability of the study to women of different classes and categories by means of analysis of the importance of their mental, social, financial and cultural independence in line with their capabilities to gain better quality of life.

CHAPTER ONE

WOMEN WRITERS AND EXPRESSIONS OF SELF

Walker's (1984) definition of 'You trying to be grown', 'womanish' (ix) serves to question society's rejection of the female protagonists' behaviour and attitudes as outrageous, audacious, courageous and wilful. As the study explores how selected women writers use dramatic narrative through the prism of social phenomena, these female characters display their desire for autonomy, liberation and sexuality. This gives rise to the tension between oral culture (that has been commonly recognised as a woman's domain) versus written culture (commonly recognised as a man's domain); and emphasises the hierarchical nature of power; indeed, the characters' position in society is viewed through the ways they communicate with the world. The study's intention is to explore the notions of power and hierarchy in dramatic language.

As the starting point is an assumption that there are linguistic features that can be explained only in relation to gender, language has been seen as an avenue through which the self is formed and an individual's world is shaped. At first glance, this seems to place women in a relatively powerless position, especially compared to that of men, as the language they use is in alignment to a particular set of cultural values that are man-made and reflect man's experience of the world. Ann Weatherall's argument in *Gender, Language and Discourse* (2002) that women's speech style seeks to establish connection and affiliation while men's speech style reflects their concerns with status may be glimpsed in the female writers' use of dramatic language. Lakoff, Spender, Cameron, and Coates (amongst others), have all sought

to clarify how women use language as a tool of self-definition in a patriarchal society and the expression of the peculiar sense of identity unburdened by sexist constraints has certainly been one of the themes that recur and is expressed in different ways in women's writing, whether as a distant potential or as a workable solution.

Theorists such as Walker, Showalter, Cameron, and Wood also view that sexist language not only defines, demeans or depreciates women, makes them invisible, passive or silent; sexist language can also inspire resistance in any socio-cultural milieu. While this view does not only apply to black women but to any marginalised woman anywhere in the world, this study hopes to extend this idea to analysis of male characters who become victims of their own words and are shaped by heterosexual imperatives.

While some of the selected writers discussed here might be interested in feminist discourse, others have refused to be seen as feminist writers for a variety of reasons. The wide range of opinions on how to define feminism is one of the main motivations for writing this study, which leads to a womanist reading of the chosen plays. With an understanding of the different shades of feminism, Walker's womanist theory may be seen as an alternative to feminism that wishes to realise female empowerment through language. However, while the study seeks to build womanist reading as preferable to earlier feminist interpretations, it does not wish to reinforce a popular misconception that feminist discourses are innately anti-male and intended as radical acts of protest. Quite the contrary, in many ways the author agrees with writers like Wood (2003), Baumgartner and Richard (2000) who believe that feminism is a movement for the social, political and economic equality of both

women and men, and that 71% of men agree with the principles of the feminist movement. With this given information, it indicates that the popular belief that feminism is for women only is faulty. This shows that majority of men are pro-feminist, and the popular opinion of western feminism arguably misconstrues the movement's actual goals, values and achievements. It should be noted at this point, that this study draws upon feminist writing that supports the notion of language and literature as essential to the expression of female identity.

However, women writings from several continents seem to provide alternative answers to the question that Janet Todd presented in her work *Women's Fiction* (1982) regarding where their inspiration and challenges come from:

If 'feminism', in a 1970s sense, claims absolute equality of the sexes and complex identification of roles, then no woman in the eighteenth-century England advocated it; if it implies equal opportunity, then probably only Mary Wollstonecraft . . . might qualify. But if a feminist is one who is aware of female problems and is angry or mildly irritated at the female predicament, then almost every woman writer and many men could claim the title (15).

Todd's observation calls for the re-evaluation of women's writings in order to show that women are not passive sexual objects but individuals capable of meaningful and effective tool for combating sexist language. Much like feminism, Walker's womanism is interested in 'changing the world as an educated woman' (37). She seeks to present marginalised female discourse that involves economical, sociological, cultural theories and philosophies concerned with the issue of gender differences, and also seek to eradicate sexism and antagonism between genders. These theories advocate equality for women; they campaign for women's capability and women's interests and sexuality in the society. Although the diffuse aims, and the

absence of discussion concerning the black race and lower class women, makes some feminist writing unsuitable for this study, much of the writing does engage acknowledge socio-linguistic factors, and is thus useful for exploring the womanist aesthetics of assertiveness in the selected women writers' works. Not only is womanism seen as a marginalised ideology which has different facets that can be applied by different groups, often, it is defined as 'other', it also manifests one's representation of oneself and how one is being represented.

The view expressed above echoes Walker's ideas about female discourse; she sees womanism as a theory that has given marginalised women a sense of self-identity within the patriarchal system whereby their 'othering', emotional and irrational weakness, and fragility are replaced with reason, strength, discipline and independence through by redefining the socio-cultural laws. Womanist theory is therefore seen as the extension of feminism into theoretical or philosophical discourse which aims to understand and analyse the nature of gender inequality from the 'other's perspective. As this theory explores women's roles and experiences through art history and contemporary art, women's aesthetics, discrimination against women, stereotyping, sexual objectification, and oppression within patriarchy framework, this study sees it a theory that can give the marginalised women a voice with which to speak against their oppression.

The notion that womanism promotes difference as the basis for illustrating of women's capabilities may be seen in works emerging from the African-American community, where writers like Alice Walker, Toni Cade, Audre Loude, Barbara Christian, Toni Morrison and Mary Helen Washington have arguably attempted to

liberate black literature from different forms of oppression, segregation and criticism. As these writers' work is profoundly personal, they also draw readers' attention to lost and rediscovered women writers, the stories of black women in search of female identity and identification of the black community as a whole. In terms of the feminist movement, these African-American women writers see themselves as excluded from white feminist discourse, which makes them yearn for their own identity, and a creative outlet could include their race, sex, class and sexuality. This in turn opens a way of examining gender in conjunction with other considerations such as class and ethnicity, which supports Cora Kaplan's argument in *Sea Changes: Culture and Feminism* (1986), that writing is part of a political process of resistance, arguing that defiance is a component of the act of writing for women. While this group of black women writers deviated from their white counterparts, the female writers deviated from the male literary traditions that created unequal gender relations. Even though these writers reject the limitations of a white ethnocentric view of feminism, they value difference as a dynamic focus for criticism.

The creation of Alice Walker's womanist theory became a breaking ground for this group of women. As many of these African-American writers celebrated Walker's womanist theory, others were in search of a better suited theory borne out of movements such as black feminism, postcolonial feminism, and sisterism, amongst others. While this may prove liberating at a glance for African American writers and audiences alike, it does not answer the problem of universality, as movements such as the ones mentioned above are predominately focused on women's experiences originating from African shores. In order to explore if Walker was correct in claiming that womanist theory has a potential to expand the views of black feminism

to other cultural experiences, narratives and literary criticisms one must therefore test her ideas in other cultural and racial milieus. Walker's statements have not always been popular amongst black feminists who sought to create a strand of female discourse independent of white feminism and it would certainly be of wider interest to speculate what would result from an application of Walker's writing outside African-American cultural experience. Walker herself believes that womanism has universal qualities that outgrow race or nation when she asserts that womanist theory is 'traditionally universalist' (xi) by her analysis of the young girl who is inquisitive to know why they are 'brown, pink, yellow', and some of their cousins are white, beige and black' (xi). This helps in the analysis of Walker's use of flower garden as a metaphor for women of different race coming together to fight for a just cause. Whilst so far western criticism has been used to explore and interpret non-western work, offering an alternative theoretical viewpoint that is not based on ethnic and/or national origin may yield interesting results when applied to the western dramatic works, especially in comparison with their non-western counterparts. The questions that may be posed here are would Walker's definition of womanism work if applied to Scottish writings by women, and how much agreement would it find if compared with West African women's writings from the same period? Furthermore, could it still be convincingly defined as universal?

The author's curiosity to learn more about Walker's theory and its universal application through the selected women writers' use of language, imagery, characters, themes etc., is one of the main inspirations for this study. The enthusiasm for the study deepened when the author discovered that there are certain elements of Walker's theory that can be applied beyond African and African-American shores.

Although, one cannot escape the fact that the dramatic literature is written to be performed and therefore the translatability of ideas from text to page beyond a specific cultural framework will be looked at to determine if the characters and themes can live and be understood beyond their own cultural boundaries.

The study focuses on specific womanist principles, namely on capability, audaciousness, strength and assertiveness and applies them to analysis of both West African and Scottish play texts to see if their meanings change outside African and African-American experiences. Such freedom allows Walker to include the lesbian feminists who explore the somatic theory of writing that sees the relation between sexuality and textuality as a counter-argument to the belief that writing is phallogentric. This study engages with and goes beyond Walker's womanist theme that ranges from racism to sexism, the relation between life and art, the role of the artist, the process towards self-definition of characters, and other socio-cultural issues. However, it also unveils that the respective manners in which selected writers treat their dramatic material, in their attempt to elaborate female marginalisation, tend to reinforce the ideology of separate spheres.

Alongside this definition of separate spheres lies the writers' portrayal of sisterhood across various boundaries, which is identified in the analysed works. Exploring Walker's view of sisterhood in womanist definition shows women who bring together their histories of separation and fragmentation to seek unison amongst themselves as a way of redressing their situations. Walker does not only advocate sisterhood, female-bonding and unity with the community that enriches her 'other' view of feminism; she also provides a new perspective for American feminism and

feminist literary discourse. Walker's explanation for the need for sisterhood is similar to J. Mitchell and A. Oakley identification in *The Rights and Wrongs of Women* (1976) that most of these women had previously seen themselves as not only isolated from other women, but also as being in competition with them. Women began to assert their identification with one another and claim a collective strength embodied in the notion of 'sisterhood is powerful' which was coined by Kathie Sarachid in 1968 and popularised in Robin Morgan's book *Sisterhood is Powerful* (1970). Although this phrase is common in the writings of so-called 'radical feminists', the focus of their writing is arguably the rage of women against men. This is still common in women's writings who see their female characters as subsumed in externally imposed societal laws that negate both their personal and collective images. On the one hand, Walker's definition identifies sisterhood as a mother and daughter relationship in which a female child is brought up to have a damaged self-image, womanist theory believes in any woman's identity. And on the other hand, she sees sisterhood as the ability of a woman who 'appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counter balance of laughter), and women's strength' (xi). Walker's view corresponds with most of the mother-daughter relationships in the selected plays where the mothers are determined to curtail their daughters' right to challenge the accepted order. This also mirrors Felly Nkweto Simmond's view in *Desperately Seeking Sisterhood* (1997), who believes sisterhood is a feminist principle based on commonality between women:

. . . feminists of the second wave, such as Robin Morgan, used the symbolism of sisterhood, of belonging to womanhood, as a way of articulating an urgent message for constructing global feminism based on personal and political alliances between women. The idea was powerful and seductive (21).

Simmond's view does not recognise that this statement raises more questions than it answers. She identifies Judith Roof's argument about sisterhood in *Feminism Beside Itself* (1995), that sisterhood simultaneously presents the motive for feminist action and helps to publicise female oppression in their societies. However, the unification of different women into an amorphous sisterly protagonist positioned against a figurative father tends to completely overlook positional differences between women (and all issues relating to position). These further raises the question of women and marriage; if men and marriage are female oppressors, then why marry at all, and after all if married, divorce is a viable option. Also, other women who still loved their husbands and children were faced with the dilemma of who to place first, their love for themselves, or their love for their husband and children. Roof's observation has been discussed in relation to the character of Glover's Rona in *The Seal Wife*, as she sees marriage as a form of women's oppression that needs to be avoided.

Amongst the feminists who see sisterhood as a form of commitment are Renate Klein and Susan Hawthorne; in their work, *Cyberfeminism: Connectivity, Critique and Creativity* (1999) they argue that "sisterhood does not mean that every woman should like, love or commit to every other woman without critical engagement. What it does mean is that we respect, support and encourage women's efforts to achieve freedom globally, we work to further the interests of women as a diverse group and we work with women in our own fields when this is possible" (57). These two writers believe that sisterhood is an act of solidarity, sisterly affection, sorority, unity and friendship that aimed to put an end to vulnerability and internalised oppression amongst women in their respective societies. This observation is explored in Okoh's

Edwede which shows that some women writers use their writings to create a form of sisterhood to engage with the womanist/ feminist cause.

Unlike feminism and womanism which have created a lot of controversy, sisterhood has not generated any other term of political solidarity. Rather, some African-American feminists have identified its inadequacies such as arrogance and bias amongst the white middle class women who engaged in it. In *Sisters Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (1984), Audre Lorde writes about the “Sister Outsider” as an oxymoron phrase which suggests to the reader that the problem is not really with concept of sisterhood, but the limiting way it has been used in the women’s movement. Another work that analyses limitations of sisterhood is by a black feminist, Bell Hooks, in *Killing Rage: Ending Feminism* (1995) where she identifies that:

Sisterhood became yet another shield against reality, another support system. Their (white feminists’) version of sisterhood was informed by racist and classist assumptions about white womanhood that the white “lady” (that is to say the bourgeois woman) should be protected from all that might upset or discomfort her and shielded from negative realities that might lead to confrontation (296).

Hook argues that white feminists did not incorporate self-transformation into their view of sisterhood in order to establish a more inclusive solidarity amongst other women. This reveals how white middle class feminists benefited from the concept of sisterhood at the expense of other women. However, she concludes that sisterhood is possible amongst women of different races and cultural background but only with continuous fight against any form of division, especially racism. This entails that sisterhood involves a sense of sympathy, drawing other women nearer to oneself

emotionally and identifying with their plights. According to Hooks, she believes that the concept of sisterhood is let down by its ignorance of political solidarity. Hooks' perspective of sisterhood is named through Spivak's (1988) coinage "Strategic Essentialism" which is a major form of post-colonial theory. This is a strategy that nationalities, ethnic groups or minority groups can use to present themselves without compromising their strong differences. Thus, it helps to create goals to overcome the seemingly intractable problem of unequal representation between genders, rather simply acting as a metaphor or an abstract concept.

Sisterhood links are explored in this study in relation to the respective writers' treatment of women's oppression of other women visible in Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods* and Lochhead's *MQS*. The present author seeks to provide that these writers show the discontinuity in gendered conditioning as some of the female characters succeed in escaping gendered expectations through the discussion of the negative images of women in society. While some of the older female characters such as Nora in *Bold Girls* and Ebikere in *Edewede* serve as patriarchal law keepers, many of the younger female characters ask questions about their physical, emotional, psychological, financial and moral autonomy through the use of audacious language which is later put into action. Such audaciousness makes these female characters unrestrained by convention or propriety, spirited and exceptionally bold. Constructing audacious language is one of the major elements in Walker's womanist theory that sees the audacious young girl long for wisdom and a level of knowledge considered inappropriate for a female. In womanist theory, these audacious and creative aspects present women as undiminished beings who refuse to be victims of patriarchal whips. As Walker sees womanist theory as a way of creating alternatives

to the existing social order and developing a new critical tradition in order to achieve true reformation of canonical patriarchy,² Wood (2003) observes that:

Walker's "you acting womanish" meant women who act boldly, courageously, wilfully, and in ways that white females don't act. Womanish girls are definitely not girlish, silly or trivial in their thoughts and actions. Instead to be womanish is to demand to explore more than others say is good for you- to know, demand and stretch beyond what is prescribed for a woman or girl (77).

Although, on the one hand, Walker affirms that womanist theory teaches women of all races that they are capable of change within the patriarchal societies, this study questions its universal appeal as it is seen as a limited theory which only applies to a select few, even amongst the African and African-American societies that tend to celebrate it. On the other hand, this study identifies some womanist elements that can cut across different patriarchal societies as analysed in other chapters. In Walker's definition, readers identify some key elements that convey certain moral values especially regarding sexuality; one is obliged to question further whether the theory actually portrays the black family, church and community's view of sexual ethos. Walker's definitions of womanism creates a link with Ruthven's (1990) observation, where she identifies different feminists and names them 'socio-semio-psycho-marxist feminists' (19) who are categorised as women who tend to do a bit of everything as the occasion arises.

Through close textual analysis, this study engages with both the theoretical and the practical side of Walker's womanism to explore language in gender representation. It also uses the feminist sociolinguist view of language to support the aesthetic of

² The term patriarchy has been used since the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to mean the rule, dominance and authority of the father within the family and society.

assertiveness, which identifies how gender is determined by the socio-cultural expectations of females or males. The theoretical part of the thesis deals with the womanist theory as incepted in the collection of essays in Walker's (1984) which has been written in relation to her four part womanist's definition. The practical part has been identified through the analysis of the selected sixteen plays where language is biased, does not give women writers opportunities to be celebrated so much as criticised. In this analysis, specific attention has been given to the ways in which the plays portray female characters with womanist nature. This has been done through the use of assertive language that embodies social, cultural and economic knowledge, which does not recognise women's writers as being exceptional or rare but as writers who have messages to pass across and they are able to do that.

The specific aspects of womanist theory under scrutiny here are the notions of female creativity, assertiveness, strength and audacity, especially its ability to shape the female gender's language, values, rights and opportunities in the two societies that, though culturally different, can be made comparable by virtue of still being predominantly male dominated. While there may be subtle differences between these two continents and their treatment of the female gender, the fact remains that some of the womanist elements mentioned above are visible and applicable in both continents which has helped in the selection of the analysed plays.

The route by which the two traditions have been chosen has not been without its challenges. To say that all the West African traditions will be explored in this study is misleading; the writers under scrutiny belong to two West African countries - Nigeria and Ghana. The choice was guided by a number of cultural and artistic

similarities, and the fact that both countries have strong traditions of dramatic publishing and are Anglophone speaking countries who share similar colonial histories.

When deciding upon an appropriate western counterpart, North American and British tradition(s) of dramatic writing have been considered initially, the former due to its obvious link to Walker and the latter due to a long tradition of women's writing for stage that explores women-related themes and is linguistically eclectic. African American women writers such as Ntozake Shange, Anna Deavere Smith or Lorraine Hansberry were excluded as they did not meet the criteria of 'different culture and race'. The work of white American feminist authors such as Sallie Bingham, Deb Margolin or Wendy Wasserstein was often found either overtly biographical or activistic, and therefore excluded as it completely disregarded male gender or treated it unfavourably.

Out of their British counterparts Caryl Churchill's, Sarah Daniel's, Pam Gem's, Timberlake Wertenbaker's, Anne Devlin's, Catherine Tregenna's, Sue Glover's and Liz Lochhead's plays were looked at, amongst others. This study engages in the writers' use of metaphoric, dramatic and poetic language to portray how women's unequal position in society often results in a stilted sense of self that affects their self esteem. These are women writers who use their writings to define their female characters through the texts to create individuals that are representations of self and ideals within the literary culture. However, the issue of what constitutes a 'British dramatic tradition', in the same sense in which a 'West African tradition' had been queried before; this resulted in the author's decision to narrow down her scope to

Scottish female writers who are engaged with their female characters in order to redress their marginalised position, and create a comparison with Nigerian and Ghanaian traditions. Consequently, this study wishes to focus on how the selected women writers use language creatively to express gender and status within their societies, based on the notion that gender, culture and language are interlinked.

The selected women writers (writing between the 1960s and 2008) express female voices from a marginalised 'other' view, exploring different forms of womanism. While Walker explores the relationship between men and women, and why women are always condemned for doing what men do as an expression of their masculinity, why women are so easily "tramps" and "traitors" when men are heroes for engaging in the same activities (256), the selected plays lend credence to this assertion and also create avenues for change. Through the use of empowered female characters the writers created positive role models. This is another reason to examine the plays, to see if they belong to an alternative feminist tradition of creativity. The selection of these writers go in line with other writers that are able to portray female characters who are outcasts, struggling in the domestic sphere while also allowing them to have a voice in the public sphere at some point in time of the play. While the works of these women writers are not uninfluenced by the issue national identity and postcolonial discourse (in Scotland and West Africa respectively), this study does not focus on these aspects but will make references to them where need be.

Once the two cultural traditions and writers were chosen, the scope was narrowed down further to eight women writers (four from each tradition) whose class, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds offer sufficient diversity and who deal with similar issues

and themes in their plays. The reason for the selection of these particular writers is that they represent the cross-section of their respective societies; they belong to the first and second generation of women writers whose radicalism challenge public attitudes, they represent aspects of both rural and urban life, working and middle class status .

These writers question the socio-cultural layout of what it means to be black and female and what it means to be Scottish and female through their various themes; they examine the relationship between language, gender and culture. Through their portrayal of these interdependent social influences, the writers recognise that gender as a social construct has incorporated the problem of language, identity and autonomy. Adrienne Scullion observes in *Contemporary Scottish Women Writers* (2000) that the dynamics of identity and community, marginality and self-reflection, inclusion and exclusion, are key themes across a range of writings by contemporary Scottish women writers. At root is a concern with the idea and the representation of the 'nation' that is Scotland (94). Scullion's observation can also be applied to the works of the West African women writers whose works exposes the culture, class and language of the female gender where culture could be described as a norm that demands a woman be seen and not heard. As a reaction to this, women writers portray their female characters as a unique entity; they believe that neither gender should be viewed as 'superior' as they complement each other.

Increasingly, one notices that both cultures under analysis tend to depict women as metaphor for colonial exploitation which makes the writers present character stereotypes with damaged self-image trying to correct the assumed imperfection of

their gender. Most of these writers look to their cultural history, often developed from a male point of view to re-evaluate female situations like women's lifestyles, masculinity, motherhood, gender, poverty and connections between their body, sexuality and representation. Casey Miller and Kate Swift consider this view in *Words and Women* (1976) as they notice that when women in the movement review history, their purpose is to emphasise that women's lives, deeds and participation in human affairs have been neglected or undervalued. Walker believes that this redressing of history is central to womanism. Although the writers discussed here are categorised as expressing differing ideologies, this study will focus on their shared womanist aesthetic of assertiveness, allows the writers to use their chosen medium to rewrite certain portrayals of their gender.

While the plays under analysis are representative of different geographical, peer, and experiential groups, the analyses of all the works open up debate on social stratification which explores the hierarchical arrangement of individuals into division of power and wealth within the society. In line with the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's claims in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984), social stratification is based on aesthetics whereby one chooses how to present one's social space to the world, and how one's aesthetic disposition depicts one's status. Feminist sociolinguists like Deborah Cameron, Jenifer Coates, Margaret Duechar (amongst others), meanwhile, have critiqued the part of social stratification that uses social dialect data to support the notion that social self-expression is innately influenced by gender.

The selected writers readdress female issues in line with the view of social stratification that does not see the male language as the norm in the society but see the female language as a language that can make positive changes to their deprived gender. The plays engage in a form of social mobility whereby some of their female characters deal with linguistic aesthetic changes to help with their deviated socio-cultural position. By doing this, they depart from the media and masculine representations of femininity, creating female characters that are not totally dependent or subservient which helps them re-address women being seen and taken as commodities.

While the predominant guide in selecting the plays was the writers' treatment of specific themes and the issues such as linguistic, stylistic and gender dichotomies (colloquial vs. formal, oral vs. written, dramatic vs. poetic, dreamlike vs. real, female vs. male), each of these plays have been chosen as representative of the writers' oeuvre. The study aims to offer sufficient evidence that the central hypothesis would not have changed significantly if another set of plays by these writers' had been considered.

A study of the selected writers' language will provide a reliable method towards interpretation of their themes which Walker views as each writer writing the missing parts to the other writer's story (49). Although different thematic preoccupations such as woman's position in society and how this position affects her perception of identity and determination, the cultural vulnerability, apathy and tolerance towards a woman's situation, the politics involved in woman's language, the quest for self-actualisation, the expression of woman's sexuality, and motherhood have been

identified in the plays. All the selected writers have treated the issue of sisterhood in one way or the other. This mirrors Ksenija Horvat's observation in *Cat on the Hot Tin Roof* (1999) that:

Woman's position in society shows how these authors identify and subvert the concept of separate spheres. These separate spheres divide the social world into 'public and private, economic and domestic, labour and leisure' and a priori puts men into a dominant position in a public domain, while concurrently banishing woman to a marginal domestic domain (6).

Such subversion of separate spheres indicates that women have changed, from being the listeners to the listened to, by entering into the public sphere. Julia T. Wood noted in *But I Thought You Meant . . . : Misunderstandings in Human Communication* (1998) that as women become more assertive and active in public life than their foremothers, many men are changing their roles from being dictators and commanders as assigned by the culture. These women in question, according to Wood (1998), are real women. Wood's view is similar to Walker's definition of womanism that real women still look good, preferably very pretty and sexy, adore children and motherhood, care about homemaking and also work outside of the domestic sphere. In line with Walker's definition of womanism, readers see that she indicates various things that are not easily summed up, but view women as beautiful and strong beings without denouncing men or white feminists in the process. Walker's womanist project devotes more attention to the female artist in particular who seeks to integrate the past and present with individual and communal, personal and political change.

Through the four part of Walker's womanism which is explored, this study sees that selected women writers recognise the domestic duties women are limited to, such as childbearing and motherhood, keeping the home clean and beautiful, and maintaining a polite and accommodating attitude, which are significant to their exploration of the feminine domain, but each of them deals with these issues in different ways. In Walker's (1983) essay, she blends two senses of motherhood as being symbolical and spiritual, seeing that each woman is capable of bringing another into the world which she assumes as a commitment all women should embrace. While some of the selected writers such as Sue Glover, Ama Ata Aidoo, reject childbearing and motherhood as being natural and prescriptive to femaleness, others like Julie Okoh, Marcella Evaristi, see it as an obligatory and innate part of womanhood. Although this idea is similar to Walker's assertion that womanism appreciates and defends women's right to their own culture, flexibility and strength, the writers see motherhood from a different perspective. This makes them see motherhood in relation to the psychoanalytical and socio-linguistic theories that limit the females to gender conditioning.

In situations where female children are being brought up under an Oedipal complex, their sexuality and social relationships are naturally subjected to the process of repression. Stevi Jackson notes in *The Desire for Freud: Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (2010) that psychoanalysis is also very bad news for anyone attempting to keep children from becoming feminine or masculine stereotypes (129). This shows how psychoanalytical theory creates what Deborah Cameron identifies in *The Feminist Critique of Language* (1998) as a model of "psychic economy" (90) that effectively makes women totally lost, outside of themselves as they go through the

awful submission to the male dominated order. Psychic economy therefore entails that what constitutes being male or being female is determined by culture bestowed on the individual by an unalterable biological make-up.

The selected writers do not only focus on women's experiences in their writing, their writings present the primary concern that engages in the deconstruction of different stereotypical portrayal of female characters that often, though not necessarily always, feature in the writing of male authors, and to counter this, they often feature weak or absent male characters. Walker observes that writers must be free to explore and discover what is needed to be known by others (264). While these writers' write with their perception of the female body, unlike the male writers who write outside the female's body, they portray female characters and female essence accurately that appeals to the audience and readers senses. On the contrary, there is a greater likelihood that women will be negatively portrayed by male authors and intentionally or not, placed in stereotypical roles that negate equality to females or prevent their assertion in a predominantly patriarchal society.

The selected women explore the socio-political and dramatic tensions through linguistic binary opposites, such as indigenous versus foreign, colloquial versus standard, dominated versus dominant. The very politics of language, that is English as a colonial language in the case of West African writers or the frequently uneasy relationship between English and Scots in the case of Scottish writers, has often been used in the selected plays to critique the past and the present. This study wishes to revisit the ways in which these writers employ language in their writing from a womanist perspective in order to ascertain whether or not existing interpretations

may allow new meanings to emerge in terms of how gender is looked at, and how character relationships are built in these plays.

Bill Findlay refers to this idea in *Scottish Theatre Since the Seventies* (1996) about the Chilean playwright Ariel Dorfman's observation in an interview with *Glasgow Herald* (1995) that the dilemma the Scots have about language is a dilemma of many people around the world. It is a dilemma of the bilingual and it's a good dilemma to be in "rather than seeing it to be our detriment, it should be something which enriches our lives (192). This shows the two cultural traditions under analysis use the mixture of alien and vernacular languages as a means of expressing their ideas. While writing in English language, these women writers contribute to the awakening national consciousness which is another way of engaging in the debate of national identity. Dorfman however acknowledges that bilingualism, whether between two related languages or between standard or non-standard languages, is a historic and linguistic reality in many countries.

A significant issue is the aesthetic employed by these writers to use English as the public language and vernacular as the private language that shows the view of self identity as reflective organised narratives. Unlike Scotland, where English and Scots languages can hardly be used in isolation as a medium of expression, West African languages can be used as a single medium of expression whereby the English language is rendered powerless. However, in the two West African countries in this study, English is employed as their national and public language that allows most of the citizens to be identified within the linguistic sphere. Apart from getting across to a wider audience, women writers' recognition in the public sphere becomes one of

the reasons why they use English language. This also allows them to question most of the patriarchal cultures, how it has represented them in different writings and also to launch themselves in the public sphere through writing, which is different from the oral form they are known for. This is reflected in Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods* and Lochhead's *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off*; the linguistic binary opposites are used to emphasize the female protagonists' unequal position in the society.

For example, in Sofola's play, the use of this form of communication by Ogwoma is a way to represent the culture that places her in the position of inequality and forces her to communicate in the language that is not 'her own', while in Lochhead's play, the use of English by Elizabeth and Scots and French by Mary create powerful dramatic conflict where linguistic power equals the struggle for political power that is imposed upon them. Both alienate them from their own nature, thus they become symbols of split nationhood at the expense of their personal identities.

While the selected works have been explored in the light of Showalter's assertion that women tell their story in women's language which is capable of expressing their cultural perspective directly, the study draws attention to Walker's womanist view of women's intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual wholeness through language. In the selected plays, female characters employ various modes of communication to redress woman's subjugation. They employ a variety of forms like songs, dialogues, proverbs, and storytelling that help to expose the sexist tragedy of woman's history at a point in time which shows that the female protagonists are, or have been, victims of sexism. For example, Okoh's *Edewede* explores Showalter's four characteristics

by discussing the dangers of female circumcision and changes in ways in which female characters understand self and society, through the use of songs, dialogues, and proverbs. While the older generation of female characters in the play see female circumcision as a culturally coded rite of passage, the younger generation view it as an archaic custom that claims innocent female lives, leaves some with emotional/physical trauma and deprives all of sexual enjoyment. Such emotional and psychological trauma is also explored in Sue Glover's *The Seal Wife*.

There is an act of mental and spiritual (psychological) circumcision, rather than the physical act in the characterisation of Rona, the protagonist, who sees motherhood as a cultural imposition that limits women within the society. This mirrors Audrey Bain's observation in *Loose Cannons: Identifying a Women's Tradition in Playwriting* (1996) that the importance of the unspoken histories of women to female writers in Scotland has led to the use of various discourses to uncover and articulate areas of women's experience occluded by patriarchal society. Like Lochhead and Munro, Glover uses folkloric linguistic elements to deconstruct both the historically determined perception of women as merely domesticated, and the indoctrinated ideas of female submissiveness.

However, while the analyses of the selected plays are done through a sociolinguistic approach which questions the connection between language and society, this will also enable the author of this study to determine how powerful or otherwise the female characters are by focusing on their uses of assertive language and behaviour. This is to confirm the sociolinguists' view that language is governed by social conventions where the social structures account for the trends of language use, which

invariably allows women's outward identity to be seen as socially imposed to protect patriarchy. Such a patriarchal stand is a gendered attribute that feminist and womanist theory seeks to eradicate in order to help women perceive themselves as capable human beings rather than accepting themselves as simply the opposite of men.

Taking a cue from feminist theory, Deborah Cameron reaffirms in *Feminism and Linguistic Theory* (1992) that feminism begins when we approach sex differences as constructs, and show how and in whose interests they are constructed. We underestimate, at our peril, the difficulty and danger with which the 'politics of variation' are fraught (40). Cameron observes that differentiating between sexes is not a feminist gesture, as she seeks a feminist research that will criticise explanations that see gender as something 'obvious, static and monolithic' (40). Although feminism has produced a range of theoretical frameworks from which women's roles and personality in society are explored with the aim of developing a better understanding of the conditions that underwrite power relationships between men and women across different societies, it would be erroneous to say that all sex difference in language are aimed at creating female stereotypes and insults to the female gender.

As these writers are able to bring out their view of female literary tradition in their own way using their own language, they create a sense of authenticity in the female characters. Thus, it helps them to speak on behalf of the female gender both in the private and public sphere. Such female creativity shows their increasingly visible use of aesthetics of assertiveness. This reflects Jane Flax's claim in *Postmodernism and*

Gender Relations in Feminist Theory (1990) that postmodernism and feminism share scepticism about knowledge, truth, language and the self. Flax argument furthers the questioning of some androcentric beliefs about women's inferior position and their use of language which reveals that the problem of women was not only sexual but the struggle to be accepted in the public domain. One important issue noticed in the aesthetic of assertiveness is the writers' ability to call the readers to reflect on the overlapping themes of gender and sexuality, the intersection of ethnicity, class and identity as represented by the society which the writers are able to elaborate more on without the interference of the male gender.

The selected sample of women writers used in this analysis explores different levels of the politics and dichotomies involved in the female-male relationships at several stages. Although many of these women writers are accused of being anti-male in their exploration of the female gender's identity, some are also critiqued as being too mild in re-addressing female situations. All of these writers explore female identity through their use of language which draws attention on the overlapping themes of gender and sexuality, ethnicity, class and sexual identities. Such issues have been analysed by the sociolinguists who see language as a medium of sexist representation where the difference in conventional language and women's language confirms that both sexes accord a higher social status to the male gender.

After much discussion on women's writers and their use of language to revalue their positions within society in this chapter, the other chapters will offer a critical analysis of the ways in which these women writers use some elements of womanist's assertive language creatively to redress power relationships and give their female

protagonists voices. In other words, not only does this study intend to examine ways in which these writers use dramatic dialogue to establish interactions between their characters, and how (in)effective that interaction is, but it also aims to explore the dramatic characters' status through their position in the communication hierarchy through their use of assertive language. This hierarchical relationship is noticeable in all of the selected plays, for example, in Rona Munro's *Bold Girls* the absence of male characters from the stage means that the female protagonists' linguistic behaviour assumes the pecking order of male-female linguistic patterns in social relationships. With this conscious or unconscious attitude of creating absent or weakened male characters, or creating female characters as harlots, contemptible, voiceless, dependent, and powerless, the writers explore what this study considers to be the aesthetic of assertiveness which allows the female characters to be in charge of their own lives both in the private and public spheres. Such an aesthetic of assertiveness help reduce sexism to an insignificant level as different women dismissing those that ridicule, exploit and condemn them as socially irrelevant. This explores female dignity, alternative views of femininity, protestation and feminine aesthetics of female creativity.

The study has intentionally limited its analysis of personal, cultural and national identity in order not too have a disjointed work, but the underlining hypothesis that language has a positive impact on female creativity has been used to explore these three perspectives on gender. This is due to language's ability to empower and enable a female author's freedom to think and feel, potentially shifting her status in society. This accords with Penelope Eckert's and Sally McConnell-Ginet's exploration of female identity, dignity, protestation and assertive aesthetics through

language in *Language and Gender: A Reader* (1998) where they suggest that women's language has been said to reflect their conservatism, prestige consciousness, upward mobility, insecurity, deference, nurture, emotional, expressivity connectedness, sensitivity to others, and solidarity (485). While previous feminist discourse has seen language as an oppressive tool that polarises gender into dominant and dominated in the society, this study aims to explore language's ability to express and empower feminine, or rather 'womanish', discourse in drama written by women in general and by the eight selected writers in particular.

While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy of interpretation and linguistic nuances of the selected writers, in the light of the fact that one of the traditions is alien to the author, there is no escaping the fact that the study's novel approach also entails that instead of simply using the existing approaches, it will engage in the creation of an alternative. Namely, while the existing studies tend to explore western and non-western work from the western perspective, or engage in the re-evaluation of non-western work from post-colonial experience, this study will look at both West African and Scottish plays from the distinct and marginal position of 'other'. In other words, this study will consider thematic and linguistic aspects of the plays from Spivak's (1999) subaltern perspective. The sense that womanist theory will be applied to the writings of these women writers as powerful voices to offer inspiration for the younger generation of women writers could in itself be a valuable outcome. While seeking to examine if Walker's theory indeed can be applied universally, the author allows for the possibility that ultimately, such a hypothesis might be disproven. As this study sees that women can achieve important changes pertaining to autonomy which is relevant to their future, it also identifies how the writers re-

enable women to perceive themselves as active and independent beings capable of restructuring situations with meaningful outcomes as women, mothers, daughters, wives, professionals and career driven individuals.

CHAPTER TWO

PROS AND CONS OF USING WOMANIST THEORY

As noted in chapter one, there are various sources that explore different views of feminism, its importance, effects, failures and its rejection by the ‘other’³ women who saw its inadequacies. While the techniques and the analytical insights of feminism have been widely used by women from different parts of the world, there is still continuous rejection and criticism of feminism as a universal theory as some of the developing world believe it cannot be applied to all women-related issues. As feminism cannot be underestimated in its criticism of socio-cultural ideas, beliefs, customs and practices, some of the other marginalised women see it as a theory that is not applicable to all women. For example, postcolonial feminism⁴ is against the universality of the word ‘woman’ which they see as the definition of gender and not of social classes or ethnic identities. This is because the postcolonial woman’s struggle for recognition and a voice, among both their own culture and among white feminists, which they see as a form of double colonisation.

For postcolonial theorists like Gayatri Chakravorty, Trinh T. Minh-ha and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, there is the growing influence on the developing world women who see feminist theory as solely a European or American discourse. Rather than considering the emergence of feminist ideas and feminist politics from Maggie

³The ‘Other’ woman in this study context means the deprived woman, especially the black female who sees white feminism as a movement of the privileged.

⁴ Postcolonial feminism is also known as the Third World feminism. Postcolonial feminism has a strong tie with black feminism due to its gendered history of colonisation.

Humm's observation in *Feminisms: A Reader* (1992), that feminism depends on the understanding that in all societies which divide sexes into different cultural, economic and political spheres, women are less valued than men, the Third World women consider the ideology far from all encompassing. This group of 'other' women, as discussed by Gayatri Spivak in *Selected Subaltern Studies* (1988), identified feminist inadequacies that examine issues of racism, classism and sexism which the dominant voice of the western movement could not account for.

While this study acknowledges the relationship between feminist theories, different concepts of sisterhood and female bonding in the pursuance of a common voice amongst the women, it aims to employ as its preferred method of analysis womanist theory as the 'other' shade of feminist discourse, in relation to language, gender and culture. Through the close textual analysis of the works by a selected sample of women writers, the study seeks to examine the position of women in contemporary society. Further to this, the work under scrutiny belongs to women writers from very different cultural, ethnic and generational backgrounds; for the purpose of looking into the ways in which womanist theory, in part of in the whole, may express socio-cultural beliefs of gender beyond national and cultural boundaries, this study focuses on the works from Nigeria, Ghana (parts of West Africa) and Scotland.

After much deliberation on the issue of feminism and sisterhood amongst women of different race, class, and ethnicity, the late 1970s and 1980s witnessed an internal insurgency in feminism led by women of colour. These women participated in a vigorous struggle against the sexual politics of the previous decade only to be confronted by the feminists' politics of exclusion a decade later. After women of

colour discovered their exclusion from and alienation by feminist theories and thoughts, they insisted that feminism must account for different subjectivities and locations in its analysis of women, thus bringing into focus the issue of differences particularly with regards to race and class. This is a view analysed in most of the selected plays which allows for inclusion of deprived women both in the urban and rural setting, inviting them to take active part in the redefinition of their autonomy and self.

Although women may be said to vary, there are common issues that are universal to them. Like Sandra Harding notes in *The Science Question in Feminism* (1986), women vary greatly, depending on age, class, ethnic identity, sexual orientation and so on, which feminism did not explore thoroughly; this author argues that feminism should be a social science that should examine and elaborate on how women's experience of inequality relates to racism, homophobia, classism and colonisation. While Standpoint feminists make the case that because women's lives and roles vary significantly from that of men in almost all the societies, women, regardless of race, culture and social positioning have always been in possession of a different knowledge. This belief seems to perceive women as subordinated group, seeing and understanding the world in the ways that are different from the existing male-biased perspective, but the selected plays proved otherwise. The writers re-plot women allowing the invisible, traditionally bound and effaced female characters to gain their voices at the end of the play.

Several feminist groups arose with the intention of correcting the inadequacies of feminism without much success. For example, criticism of the Standpoint feminists

came from the postmodern feminists who believe that gender roles are socially constructed and that it is impossible to generalise women's experiences across cultures and histories. The Standpoint feminists seem to ignore that the ideas of gender appropriate behaviour vary among cultures and eras, although some aspects receive more widespread attention than others. Recently, the Standpoint feminists have recognised a difficulty in claiming one universal women's experience because of the diversity in cultural practice.

The postcolonial feminists argue that oppression relating to the colonial experience, particularly racial and ethnic oppression has marginalised women in the postcolonial societies. This group of feminists rejected the assumption that views gender oppression as the primary source of patriarchy while they challenged the portrayals of non-western women as passive and voiceless victims. The observation of western feminists seeing themselves as modern, educated and empowered is condemned. Postcolonial feminists have reacted against both universalizing tendencies in western feminist thoughts and lack of attention to gender issues in mainstream postcolonial thoughts.

Despite all these feminist groups agitating for a woman's discourse that could explore women's situation from different cultures, backgrounds and experiences under the feminist umbrella, the black women sought a different terminology that would focus on exploring the experiences of women of colour. They wanted a discourse that could discuss black women's beliefs after the growing concern that feminism is not a universal concept, it cannot be applied to every woman's experience regardless of her social, racial, and cultural background, and it is

eurocentric in its nature. As these black women long for a feminist view that could describe their alienation from language and white societies, they discovered another form of silence as a symbol of oppression. For example, postcolonial feminism is critiqued by Mohanty Chandra in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (1991) where she emphasises that being a woman is constituted as much by class, race, nation and sexuality as by gender, and that ideologies of womanhood amongst women of colour have much to do with class, race and sex. She thus identifies these as three major problems with the western feminist discourse.

Firstly, Mohanty sees it as eurocentric. She asserts that the women in the third world and billions of other women the feminist approach alleges to represent are seen as powerless, weak, and emotional victims of their assumed dependence on men. This view has become a stereotype in western feminist discourse. Secondly, she purports that western feminism lacks consideration for the fact that experiences of feminism by women from the third world countries are unique and different from their western counterparts. Thirdly, Mohanty feels that western feminism is blind to the fact that as a concept it is not, and can never be universal and all-embracing. She believes that being a woman has much to do with race, class, nation and sexuality whereby gender and the ideologies surrounding womanhood are interconnected. Although many of the selected plays posit difficulties of female community, patriarchy, and language in relation to Mohanty's view, this study shows that some of the conflicts can be reversed as the female characters engage in a transfiguration through their power of voice and assertiveness. Mohanty's ideas are reiterated in Carolyn Kumah's book *African Women and Literature* (2000), where Kumah recognizes significance of Mohanty's identification of three major issues with western feminist discourse.

Kumah also challenges the notion that women constitute a coherent group with identical interests regardless of their class, ethnic and racial origins. She also rejects a stereotypical view of Third World women as "ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition bound, domestic and family oriented" as opposed to their white middle-class counterparts who are seen as "educated, modern, having control over (her)own (body, sexuality)". Mohanty also believes that women in the Third World feel that western feminism bases its understanding of women on 'internal racism, classism, and homophobia' (5). Kumah opines that:

Mohanty also addresses the tendency of western academics to employ very limited scholarship when studying the nations of the Third World...this brand of feminist theory dismisses the complexities and diversity of various women's lives projecting a false homogeneity that is just as oppressive as the structures feminists are attempting to combat (5).

Taking the above criticism into consideration, black women's sense that they have been neglected in the feminist movement led to the search for their own voices and sense of empowerment. This study agrees to a large extent with Mohanty's third view of western feminism, but the analysis of the selected works from Scotland and West Africa show that any woman regardless of their race, culture and background can be marginalised, which is visible in the Scottish plays in their search for identity. As noticed earlier in Mohanty's analysis, African feminism and the postcolonial discourses have sought to develop alternative concepts that may be better suited to explore the experience of gender divide amongst black women in Africa. This quest resulted in the formulation of concepts such as black feminism, motherism, STIWANism, femalism, Africana womanism, womanism amongst others. They all agree that sexism, class oppression and racism are inextricably bound together and

cannot be ignored in the exploration of gender. These women saw that the three forms of oppression do not only involve the female gender, it also included the male gender. Although the present author sees that sexist language not only shows men and women differently, it also shows them as unequal especially to the disadvantage of women. This study's analysis of sexist language shows that it can be changed to portray women in a positive way different from what it used to be.

The selected plays seem to demonstrate the female characters' acquisition of positive narrative changes the stories they tell about themselves; allowing them to move away from being silenced to being heard. This shows how women's narratives can generate recognition and how the process of telling histories constitutes her subjectivity, which erases stereotypes. Like many other feminist critics and writers in the western world, Patricia Stubbs reacts in *Women and Fiction: Feminism and the Novel, 1880-1920* (1981) against the traditional images of women as they appear in many writings which she believes the feminist writer ought to strive hard to change. Her illuminating analysis of women's portrayal in the images and status they occupy in the society is worth exploring further for this study. Stubbs notes that no matter what part in society individual women play, traditional images focus on their domestic and sexual roles which have the effect of limiting the notion of women's understanding of their identity and possibilities. This identification corresponds with psychoanalysis theory, where females' psychological development and experience are objectified to see her failed sense of sexuality owing to the absence of the penis.

In the plays by West African and Scottish writers that have been selected for close analysis in this study, such stereotypes are confronted and critiqued through

examining new alternative images which focus on females' strengths rather than accepting a psychoanalytical approach as the only way of exploring the psyche of women living in patriarchal societies. As the study engages with the writers' creation of female characters who explore assertiveness that allows them go beyond the female traits ascribed to them, it also displays women writers' capabilities to use language as an effective communication tool within patriarchal societies.

The West African female plays are also products of the same experiences that Stubbs identified above. These plays emerged as a solution to re-defining femalehood in the patriarchal society by creating females that will act outside the roles to which society has limited them. For example, in Igbo Nigerian traditional society, a woman is rarely admitted before the elders' council except if she is to be reprimanded for an offence, or when she has become an elderly woman who can keep 'secrets', and in some West African cultures an old woman is perceived as a 'man'. This is the stage where she is able to contribute useful ideas and be an upholder of many traditional beliefs in the male society which is analysed by the present author of this study in some of the selected plays. As both Sofola and Okoh disagree with labelling women in this way, their writings reflect that radical changes are needed in order to stop maltreatment of women in some traditional societies.

Similarly in Scottish female history, Esther Breitenbach observes in *'Curiously Rare'? Scottish Women of Interest* (1997) that Scottish women's roles are downplayed due to the power of Victorian domestic ideology. The influence of this ideology is still in operation till present which affects the historians view about a woman whereby certain privileges are accorded to the identity of wife and mother, of

the domestic, nurturing and caring role over the woman in public life, who is either a political representative, or a participant in industrial or class struggles. In order to re-address West African and Scottish women's dispossessed cultural past, a review of some aspects of culture plays a very significant role in the shaping of things through the analysis of the selected works. As the women writers' portray female development within the society, they also show how the society thwarts and disrupts the female psyche by dictating their powerlessness.

Among the writers who have focused in their work since the 1970s on issues of female identity, its stability and meaningful roles of woman are Rona Munro, Zulu Sofola, Liz Lochhead, Toni Cade Bambara, Ntozake Shange, Angela Davies, June Jordan, Toni Morrison, Zulu Sofola, and Ama Ata Aidoo. The question that needs to be poised here is whether or not it is possible to move away from feminist discourses when examining these authors' plays, given their diverse cultural, racial and social backgrounds, without losing any of significant elements of debate regarding how changes in society affect women's position and roles.

The West African women writers found a fertile ground in most of the elements of Alice Walker's womanist theory, which evolved in 1974 during the Combahee River Collective conference. Womanism proposed that the liberation of black women entailed freedom for all people, since it would require the end of racism, sexism and class oppression. In *What's in a Name? Womanism, Black Feminism, and Beyond*, (1996), Patricia Hill Collins aptly notes that many black women view feminism as a movement that at best, is exclusively for women, and at worst, dedicated to attacking or eliminating men. Womanism seemingly supplies a way for black women to

address gender oppression without attacking men. Ironically, Hill's analysis contrasted with Walker's view of engaging in the lesbian feminist discussion, all women without any racial background, which has been seen as a separatist way of eliminating men in the lives of women.

Walker's womanism which was included in the English lexicon in the early 1980s claimed that the deficiencies of the early feminist movements from the west specifically led by white women aimed only at social change for their own kind. Walker's definition of womanism can be viewed from two ends. On the one hand, she addresses the racist and classist aspects of white feminists and actively opposes separatist ideologies thus allowing the non-middle class white women to be included in the theory. On the other hand, she celebrates the cultural aspect of all women lives, represented by their own language in order to correct the negative images placed on them.

Another definition of womanism is from Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi in *Womanism: The Dynamics of the Contemporary Black Female Novel in English* (1985) who sees the theory as black-centred and accommodationist in its nature. She believes strongly that it is a theory of freedom and independence for women that want a meaningful union in the family thereby changing the sexist stand of the patriarchal men. Ogunyemi launches a radical critique of the extent to which western women have ignored the realities and locations of African women. She sees womanism as an alternative to feminism, arguing that African men and women have been united in a common struggle against colonialism. What Ogunyemi neglects is that the African culture itself is a form of enslaving women and that no theory can

universally accommodate all odds. Even though men and women might have fought against colonialism, there is still the continuity of dominant cultural beliefs that refuse to eliminate male dominance. This is another form of sexual politics based on gender inequality which shows Ogunyemi's view of womanism as a theory that disallows women from their autonomy.

Ogunyemi's view of female discourse is seen as an attempt to include all women in the discussion of female issues, as feminism is regarded as deviant in colonised countries. Some of the characteristics of Ogunyemi's womanism are also treated in postcolonial feminism whereby sexism and class oppression are seen as forms that limit coloured women's abilities to function within their respective societies. Being accommodationist is another way of using religion as part of national heritage which sees solemnity and dignity as civil events as a means to instil the moral values required in maintaining civil order.

In Ogunyemi's womanist approach, the theory accounts for the ways in which black women support and empower black men in contrast with white women's liberal and radical forms of feminism. Womanism seeks to acknowledge and praise the sexual power of black women while recognising the history of sexual violence against them. This perspective is often used as a means for analysing black women's literature as it marks the place where race, class, gender and sexuality intersect.

While Walker sees black women as people wanting to know more, people who are always in pursuit of knowledge despite their deprivation in a male dominated society, she questions the epistemological exclusion they endure in intellectual life in general and in feminist scholarship in particular. The construction of Walker's womanism

and the several definitions she used is an attempt not only to situate the black woman in history and culture, but also any group of marginalised women in a male dominated society.

As noted in chapter one, Walker's womanist definition has generated a lot of controversy, especially from the African feminist critics who at first believed that womanism as a theory may satisfy their search for a female discourse that is all encompassing. This chaotic definition suggests that womanism denotes very different things which make some women critics reject womanist theory while some celebrate and accept it as a theory that analyses women's discourse and a new form of power that can end sexism, racism and classism. For example, Shirley Anne Williams observes in *Some Implications of Womanist Theory, Collaloo 9* (1986) that womanism connotes a commitment to the survival and wholeness of an entire people, female or male, as well as a valorization of women's works in all their varieties and multitudes. Through Walker's definition, the theory is not only to see the black women as distinct but to see to the wholeness of the society that can connect women from all spheres of life together. As the study put the theory's universality to test, the meaning of womanism seems to be deeply embedded in religious and political tradition of empowerment whereby various ethnic and interest groups compete for equality of opportunities, rights, and respects to all groups.

The female protagonists explored in this study seek to redefine themselves outside their sexual/nurturing function, and seek to reinforce the right to reclaim their own sexuality as they see it outside the demands of society. However, such actions may be identified as a form of the aesthetic of assertiveness which women seek to help

women to re-engage with themselves. Employing the aesthetic of assertiveness as an alternative to womanism is an idea that allows women to use their bodies, actions and languages as working tools to see potential ways out of the flaws their socio-cultural situations have caused them. It coaches them to fight for their autonomy, develop narratives that can assert both their goodness and being irrespective of what their society demands. This sees that they can use silence, folklore and language affirmatively to negotiate their way through because the women have not had the equal share of power that men are allowed within the society.

Although womanist theory is seen as accommodationist theory by Okonjo Ogunyemi in *Womanism: The Dynamics of Contemporary Black Female Novel in English* (1985) as she has tried to include different aspects of feminine issues, lesbian feminists are seen as another form of separatist feminist. In Walker's context, lesbianism is seen as a powerful tool for reclaiming one's self which allows it to be seen as one of the key feminist strategies that enable women to devote their energies to other women rather than men, in order to create a new space of feminine dialogue and autonomy. Thus, this limits their relationship with men, almost to the point of placing them entirely in opposition with women.

Nevertheless, Walker's womanist theory notes that female discourse has moved beyond the focus on repression involving all women and the politics based of shared oppression to a discourse which recognises and embraces the difference amongst different categories of women. The study sees Walker's womanism as more of a coalition solidarity which tends to forge the generalisation of unity, identity and justice that can hardly be mediated through the study of gender, culture and

language. The analysed plays go beyond a laudable political agenda which calls for personal and social recognition through their narrations, dialogues and conversations; rather the plays look to social transformation that can affect both genders positively.

Womanism as an ideology did not start as a theoretical stance, but through the lived experiences of black American women who wanted change within their society and their cultural beliefs. Walker's analysis of women's strengths, capabilities and independence as opposed to her view of gender separatism that is assumed to bedevil feminism is what makes the theory present an alternative for female survival in the community where the fate of a woman and a man are inextricably linked. Womanism considers men as part of the women's life and calls for the collaboration of racial, economic, emotional and cultural divergences amongst all women. In view of this, some West African women celebrate womanist theory as a way of expressing themselves both in the private and public realm that allow them recover some of their lost confidences, histories and tradition of femininity. This is also noticed in the selected female Scottish writers works that engage with this view in order to give voice to the marginalised female gender both in history and at present. Some of the plays that deals explicitly with this view are Lochhead's *MQS*, Munro's *Bold Girls*, Glover's *Bondagers* and Evaristi's *Mouthpieces* where the female characters are able to readdress their view of femininity in relation to socio-cultural and historio-political values.

Such view makes the present study see womanism as another radical twist to feminism through which the 'other' women are encouraged to take part in the female discourse. According to Carla Kaplan in *The Erotics of Talk: Women's Writing and*

Feminist Paradigm (1996), she views Alice Walker as a writer working within the recuperative, archaeological tradition of feminist criticism; who has dedicated herself to uncovering the voices of women she calls “crazy saints. . . our mothers and grandmothers. . . who died with their real gifts stifled within them” (125). Owing to Kaplan’s observation, Walker (1983) agrees that she digs up lot stories of forgotten women writers who were never widely acknowledged or were merely recognised in the literary world. Although Walker agrees to be a recuperative writer, there is a risk in recuperative readings of “our own image reflected back to us” (41) as Susan Lanser observes in *Feminist Criticism, The Yellow Paper and the Politics of Color in America* (1989).

While the present writer agrees with Lanser to a large extent, she sees that Walker’s theory takes its ground in a politics of identification, as this study will argue. Walker’s theory becomes crucial to this analysis as a way of each writer writing the missing parts to the other writer’s story. This helps women writers to recreate the universe by telling their own stories to the world in their own voices through their use of assertive language. To Walker and other womanists such as Kolawole Modupe, Ogundipe-Leslie Omolara, Ogunyemi Chioma, Sherita Smedley, black women’s experience of oppression is of a distinctly different stance and more intense than that of the white women. Sherita Smedley in an article *Feminism vs. Womanism* (2007) sees Walker’s womanism as a term that has a similar meaning to feminism but her definition describes all women whether they are career driven or not. Womanism is a term of wholeness that displays women of all age groups and cultures. She also believes that many women feel comfortable with the womanist title more than feminist due to the stigmatisation associated with feminism.

To some of the above mentioned writers, womanism recreates a link with histories that include African cultural heritage, enslavement, women's culture, and kinship with other women; especially women of colour. Womanism is not just to give voice to the silenced and marginalised on the grounds of race or gender but to consider the simultaneous effects of race, class and gender which are seen as the lines of reality in analysing women of colour issues. This is identified by Linda Kauffman's *Critical Feminist Studies* (1992) that Walker views history from the bottom up and reconstructs it to reflect the voices of the oppressed, the disenfranchised, and the silenced. Walker did see that black women could be creative if only they are given the chance to be educated. She reviewed how black people were deprived of formal education by questioning in 1984 that:

What does it mean for a black woman to be an artist in our grandmothers' time? In our great grandmothers' days? It is a question with an answer cruel enough to stop the blood.... How creativity of the black woman was kept alive, year after year and century after century, when for most of the years black people have been in America it was a punishable crime for a black person to read and write (233-4).

To read and write will give the slaves the opportunity to re-examine their situations and give them a voice in the African American societies. Walker notices that, for a slave, literacy provides them with an opportunity to engage in a critical reflective dialogue regardless of the discussion. With reference to Walker, this observation is also explored by Deborah Cameron in *Feminist Critique of Language* (1998) where she discusses the master-servant relationship that existed between the black servants and their white masters. This is similar to the relationship that still exists between the female and male gender whereby to read and write creates an avenue of self-awareness:

For a slave to read and write, and for anyone to teach him or her to do so, was not merely unlikely given the conditions of enslavement, it was specifically criminalised. This was not just one more petty humiliation inflicted by the master, but a calculated act of self- protection on his part. Powerful groups often fear that the ability to read and write, should it spread among the powerless, will give uncontrolled access to subversive ideas, and so facilitate critical thought, oppression and finally rebellion (5).

As education is a means of freedom to the powerless, Cameron notes that it also creates an act of rebellion in the mind of this deprived group. The deprivation from reading and writing is an act of silencing, but Walker opines that womanism teaches women of different races that they are capable of change within the patriarchal and colonial society, one reason for its universal appeal. From Cameron's analysis, the limitation of the master to the servant is acknowledged by Adrienne Rich as 'snow blindness' or 'white solipsism' (299) in her book *On Lies, Secret and Silence: Selected Prose 1966-1978* (1980). Rich defined these terms as the tendency to think, imagine and speak as if whiteness describes the world. She further explains white solipsism not as the consciously held belief that one race is superior to all others, but a tunnel- vision that simply does not see non- white experience as precious or significant, unless in spasmodic, impotent guilt- reflexes, which have little or no long term, continuing momentum or political usefulness. Rich observation is another reason for Walker's womanist view which helps to give visibility to the experience of African American and other women of colour who have always been at the forefront of the struggle to overthrow the sexual and racial caste system but have been marginalised by the white feminists or their male counterparts.

Similarly, Collins (1996) asserts that Walker's use of the term womanism promises black women who both operate within these Black Nationalist assumptions and who

see the need to address “feminist” issues within African American communities’ a partial reconciliation of these two seemingly incompatible philosophies. She sees this theory as concerning way of discussing issues and representations of the black women in dominant discourses which encourages them to achieve visibility in the racist, classist and sexist community. Collins notices that African American women who lived through the experiences they depict in their works offer more credible accounts of those experiences than those women who imagined or read about them. This is one of the main reasons why Walker explains further that womanism appreciates and prefers woman’s culture, women’s emotional flexibility and women’s strengths.

Walker’s explanation distinguishes between femininity and masculinity in society. She views femininity as how the females see themselves, and try to appreciate their ‘self’ and ‘other’ females around. This is because both models of femininity and masculinity are part of the social definitions of gender whereby limitations are placed on the female gender. As this study engages with this perception, the counterpoint of womanism’s preference for woman’s culture, emotions and strengths is revealed through the interaction of the female characters who explore sisterhood. Thus, this study discovers that there cannot be a universal application of sisterhood; the analysed works encouraged the female characters that socio-cultural oppression of women can be changed/achieved through pressure on the patriarchal system. Walker reiterates Janet Spence and Robert Helmreich’s ideas in *Masculinity and Femininity: Their Psychological Dimensions, Correlates and Antecedents* (1978), these two writers believe that gender identity can be achieved through the erosion of gender

stereotypes. Similar to gender identity development, Jan E. Stets and Peter J. Burke identify in *Femininity and Masculinity* (1990) that:

There are at least three major theories that explain the development of femininity and masculinity: psychoanalytic theory (Freud 1927), cognitive-developmental theory (Kohlberg 1966) and learning theories that emphasize direct reinforcement (Weitzman 1979) and modelling (Mischel 1970). In all of these theories, a two-part process is involved. In the first part, the child comes to know that she or he is female or male. In the second part, the child comes to know what being female or male means in terms of femininity or masculinity (4).

As mentioned briefly in chapter one, Freudian psychoanalytic theory allows one's gender identity to evolve through the identification of same-sex parents which develops out of an intrinsic Oedipal stage of psychosexual development. This creates the closeness between same-sex relationships of parent to children. In another formulation of psychoanalytic theory, Nancy Chodorow notes in *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (1978) that mothers play an important role in gender identity development. She believes that mothers are more likely to relate to their sons as different and separate because they are not of the same sex and at the same time, they experience a sense of oneness and continuity with their daughters because they are of the same sex. As a consequence, mothers will form a connection with their daughters thereby fostering femininity in girls, which is what Walker observes in the attitude of elderly women who wish to curb womanish girls and encourage them to obey the socio-cultural norms that define her as feminine. Meanwhile, mothers distance themselves from their sons who respond by shifting their attention away from their mother and toward their fathers after being ignorantly taught domination as a masculine attribute by their mothers. This identification with their fathers creates a sense of masculinity in these boys.

Kim Marie Vaz notices in *Womanist Archetypal Psychology: A Model of Counselling for Black Women and Couples Based on Yoruba Mythology* (2006) that “relational psychoanalytic theory helps validate the past lives of enslaved African women by remembering, affirming and glorifying their contribution. After excavating analytically and reflecting critically on the life stories of our foremothers, the methodology entails construction and creation of a novel paradigm” (234). Vaz shows how psychoanalytic theory helps the womanist to discover something new about the theory and the zeal to live in a complex gendered society that has emerged from childhood experiences, from the interactions with empathetic women. On the other ground, Vaz does not analyse how Walker’s theory creates an unconscious process and the potential of psychoanalysis theory to disallow the female gender her autonomy, morality and boldness.

Cognitive-developmental theory is another psychological theory on gender identity development identified by Lawrence Kohlberg in *The Development of Sex Differences* (1966). This theory observes that there are critical events which have lasting effects on gender identity development, but they are cognitive rather than psychosexual in origin. Unlike psychoanalytic theory and learning theory that will be discussed next, cognitive developmental theory sees that gender identity comes before rather than follows from identification with the same-sex parent. Once a child's gender identity becomes established, the self is then motivated to display gender-congruent attitudes and behaviours, well before same-sex modelling takes effect. Same-sex modelling is seen as a catalyst that moves the process along. As the analysis of some of the selected plays like Munro’s *Bold Girls* and Sutherland’s

Anowa will prove, it shows the contradictions between the conceptions of wholeness and agency within the socio-cultural milieu.

Apart from the two above, the most influential of the theories of gender identity development are the social learning theories as explored in the works of Fagot (1978), Dweck et al (1978), Buss et al (1990). Although these writers considers some universal features of gender, some of the analysis also show that parents do not always teach the children gender, but children acquire their sense of gender through their reinforcement and punishments. In these theories, the social environment of the child, and factors such as parents and teachers, shapes the gender identity of a child. The parent or teacher instructs and limits the child on femininity and masculinity directly through rewards and punishments, or indirectly through acting as models that the child imitates. In direct rewards or punishments, children are often given the norms, codes and rules of what is expected of their gender. For example, outward appearances as in what to wear, girls in dresses and skirts, and boys in trousers; object choices like toy preferences, dolls for girl and trucks and balls for boys; and as far as behaviour is concerned, girls are expected to be passive, timid and dependent while the boys are to be aggressive, bold and independent. These rewards and punishments create in children the awe to learn appropriate appearance and behaviour in the society. Indirect learning of one's gender identity emerges from modelling same-sex parents, teachers, peers, or same-sex models in the media. Thus, this creates asymmetry between the two genders.

The reviewing of the direct and indirect learning of gender is what womanism theory calls for. The rejection of social learning of gender identity is observed by Walker as

a form of protest directed to both genders to speak and act against sexism, classism, and racism in the patriarchal power structure. This is to create awareness of ideological issues in order to change their attitudes about the patriarchal system which Walker believes should be one of the goals of any female discourse be it feminism or womanism as analysed in her definition.

As Walker's theory became widely accepted and applied, one of the criticisms came from her daughter, Rebecca Walker, who views womanist theory as a selfish theory by questioning what motherhood and sisterhood means to Alice Walker. Walker's daughter expresses her perception in an interview with Tessa Cunningham:

Ironically, my mother regards herself as a hugely maternal woman. Believing that women are suppressed, she has campaigned for their rights around the world and set up organisations to aid women abandoned in Africa – offering herself up as a mother figure. . . . feminism has betrayed an entire generation of women into childlessness. It's devastating. But far from taking responsibilities for any of this, the leaders of the women's movement close ranks against anyone who dares to question them – as I have learned to my cost. I don't want to hurt my mother, but I cannot stay silent. I believe feminism is an experiment, and all experiments need to be assessed on their results. Then, when you see huge mistakes, you need to make an alteration (Mail Online last updated on 23rd May, 2008).

This shows Rebecca Walker as a woman who believes motherhood is an ultimate achievement of womanhood that some of the plays to be discussed treat with dismay and as entrapment. Rebecca Walker's view of her mother is based on the feminist's perspective of the 1970s that regarded all women as sisters no matter the relationship rather than the new concepts surrounding coloured women's discourse. Reading the interview and her book, *Baby Love: Choosing Motherhood after a Lifetime of Ambivalence* (2008) reveals more about her personal views and the subjective

experiences with her mother and womanist theory. She questions her mother's view about motherhood which she sees as childhood negligence instead of an academic discourse. One paramount issue Rebecca Walker neglects is the extreme expectations of female sexuality that is either repressive or idolises motherhood.

Another criticism comes from *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves* (1993) where Hudson-Weems questions Walker's comparison of feminism and womanism as being synonymous. This makes Hudson-Weems see Walker's theory as largely intended for African Americans, while she proposes Africana womanism. Africana womanism is a term Hudson-Weems coined in 1987 after publicly debating the importance of self-naming for Africana women. She believes that Africana womanism has a natural evolution in its name that has the ideal terminology to identify the ethnicity of the African woman in relation to her cultural identity, ancestry and land base:

There is a crucial issue that accounts for the use of the term woman(ism). The term "woman," and by extension "womanism," is far more appropriate than "female" ("feminism") because of one major distinction- only a female of the human race can be a woman. "Female," on the other hand can refer to a member of the animal or plant kingdom as well as to a member of human race (48).

Hudson-Weems believes that the terminology derived from the word 'woman' is more appropriate, specific and suitable when referring to human beings as female can also be used in an electronic and mechanical terminology to mean a 'female counterbalance to the male correlative' (48). Categorically, Hudson-Weems states that her theory of Africana womanism should not be confused with Walker's notion

of womanism, i.e. ‘womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender’ (xii), which verifies Walker’s concept of the natural attraction between womanism and feminism.

This is also identified in Ekwierhoma’s (2002) claim that Africana womanism is an ideology, “created and designed for all women of African descent. It is grounded in our culture, and therefore, necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, needs, and desires of Africana women” (48). Thus, she agrees with Hudson-Weems’s idea of Africana womanism as different from and not to be confused with Walker’s theory of womanism, which they both see as being in support of all women regardless of colour, social status and experiences. Hudson-Weems confirms that Africana womanism rather than feminism, black feminism, African feminism, or womanism is a conceivable alternative for the African woman in her collective struggle with the entire community, which enhances the future possibilities for the dignity of African people and the human race.

Hudson-Weems’ theory also reproduces the psychoanalytic theory inherent in the dominant cultural assumptions and fantasies of both genders. She reflects that with such views, female gender becomes a victim of pressure, culture and mothers to conform to the feminine stereotypes. Although Walker’s womanist theory is not infallible, her definition of womanism respects female history, emotion, aesthetics, sexuality, and being, which enable it to be more universal than Hudson-Weems’s Africana Womanism in the late 1980s. For example, in relation to the Scottish female plays, Walker’s theory traces female history and their emotional attachments with the society that oppresses them. In Lochhead’s *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* (1989), Scottish history is being dramatised to allow the rethinking of

the female situation, national identity and female identity. Hudson-Weems argues that Walker's theory is defiant but fails to put into consideration the non-uniformity of African women's histories and realities. She then considers Africana womanism as the most appropriate theory to explore female discourse in Africa because of its qualities of authenticity, male compatibility, family orientation, genuine sisterhood, mothering, nurturing, adaptability, flexibility, strength, respectfulness of elders, adaptability and ambition.

After a critical look into the Hudson-Weems Africana womanism's identified characteristics, this study examines how these characteristics relate to Walker's womanist theory that identifies women's strength, capability, accommodating and audacious nature. While some of the womanist elements such as sisterhood, nurturing, authentic, respects for elders have been discarded in the analysis of the study due to their unsuitability for the exploration of the female characters, it still makes reference to them where need be. Tuzyline Jita Allan in *Womanist and Feminist Aesthetics* (1995) argues that the strength in Walker's womanist definition is the indisputable goal and vision of the theory to accommodate as many women as possible without any form of discrimination. She observes that:

What is problematic is the essentialist implication of womanism's self-definition. A womanist as "Black feminist" or "feminist of color" not only excludes white feminists whose creative vision approximates the womanist ideal (Agnes Smedley, for example) or those who might choose to incorporate aspects of womanism in their writing, especially in the wake of the recent push for inclusiveness in feminist theory. It also assumes that by virtue of being black or non white, a feminist is necessarily a womanist (93).

While both womanism and feminism originate from similar schools of thought that have risen against patriarchal domination, womanism as identified by Allan (1995) is another theory of female discourse that intensifies the struggle by fighting on several fronts because it believes that patriarchy is multifaceted. She asserts that a womanist writer is artistically committed to a radical restructuring of society that will allow for the dissolution of boundaries of race, sex and class. Walker's definition explores three different avenues of femalehood, (1) women's personal expressiveness, (2) women's emotions and (3) women's empathy that comprises the ethic of caring. In *Womanist Ways of Knowing: Theoretical Considerations for Research with African American Women* (2000), Joanne Banks- Wallace asserts that:

Personal expressiveness is highly valued in womanist epistemological frameworks. This emphasis is rooted in African traditions that view each individual as a unique example of the Divine spirit, which infuses and sustains all creation. Personal expression or style include but is not limited to language, dress, forms of worship and ways of interacting with others (321).

Emotions are revealed in dialogue, not necessarily in what a person says but how it is being said. Banks-Wallace identifies that emotions are considered to be an indicative belief of the speaker in the validity of her or his argument. Such dialoguing and sharing of experiences regardless of the format it takes provide opportunities for women to share their knowledge and wisdom which promotes community development amongst them in dealing with similar stories. This leads to the inner feelings for women which expose the womanist empathy that is believed to be a sense of concern or connection between the person making the claim and the individual evaluating the claim. Thus, empathy implies concern grounded in the realisation that one's own well-being is connected to the well-being of others. While

there cannot be a total restructuring of society as considered in the analysis of the plays, the author of this study discovers that womanism could also have an alternative way of relating to women in relation to their society through employing an aesthetic of assertiveness that will allow them to give another reading to tradition and give an equal share between the two sexes that will celebrate womanhood and femininity.

However, all these are passed across through language which seems to be the most recognised and distinguishing factor that differentiates Walker's womanist theory from other theories developed to encompass racism, classism and sexism. While analyses of the selected works have greatly proved this, the study shows that these women writers are new women writers who demand the freedom and opportunity to use their voices both in and outside their domestic domain. Language plays an important role in human communication be it written or oral. As Hazel V. Carby observes in *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro- American Women Novelist* (1987), black women had to confront the dominant domestic ideologies and literary conventions of womanhood that excluded them from the definition of 'women' through language to gain public voice as orators or published writers. Although chapter one only mentions the importance of language in female creativity, this chapter engages in the sociolinguists' view of language and how it has affected women's writings till date. This shows that language tells of the social involvement among human beings within the society and allows them to understand each other.

For example, Robin Lakoff's (1973, 1975) conceptualisation identifies language from two different perspectives. On the one hand, she points out neutral language and on the other hand, she identifies women's language. She observes that women's language is weak because they use more question tags, empty adjectives, fillers, qualifiers and other features of women language. Lakoff identifies in *Language and Woman's Place* (1975) the goals in assessing a woman's language in threefold:

To provide diagnostics evidence from language use on gender inequality; to discuss whether anything can be done on gender inequality from the linguistic end of the problem; and to provide, not the final word on sexism and language, but a goad to further research (4-5).

Lakoff sees language as a medium of hierarchical representation, her elements of women's language create a sense of exaggerated politeness that make women's language different from men's language. This roughly corresponds to the Danish grammarian Otto Jespersen's view in *Language: Its Nature, Development and Origin* (1922) that women speak more softly and politely than men, use diminutives, construct their sentences loosely and leave them unfinished. Jespersen's features of women's speech create the usual stereotype of the female gender which reinforces inequalities and differences in society as such language makes them subordinate to men. Lakoff does see the marginality and powerlessness of women as reflected in the way they use language and how the society perceive this language in relation to the female gender. She observes that apart from language being a form of prison, specifically a woman's prison which brings out the disadvantaged positions of women from the political and cultural terms, she acknowledges that women are forced to learn a weak, trivial and deferential style as part of a socialization process, therefore making them subordinates.

Lakoff identifies women's language as that form which places women in a subordinate position from early childhood onwards. Although her claim is that women are denied access to a powerful style of speech, her work opens up further researches to examine whether what she observes is true or otherwise. The search for the differences in women's and men's language use became an emphasis in different research areas as researchers began to respond to the negative social, political and historical portrayal of women. Such research is employed in the analysis of the selected works in this study which challenges some of the sexist traditions that exist between both sexes and their use of language. Although this study rejects Lakoff's view of women's language, it recognises that language has become an important tool which helps women to see themselves beyond the confined spaces of domesticity and their relation to men in some of the analysed plays. This makes them see themselves as entities whose voices can/are heard and can make positive changes within the society different from their victimised positions.

For example, Ama Ata Aidoo affirms in *Unwelcomed Pals and Decorative Slaves* (1986) that the female dramatist should dedicate her creativity energies to expository works in order to move away from gender stereotypes. She believes that female writer should be responsible for exposing the sexist tragedy of women's history, protest the on-going degradation of women, celebrate their physical and intellectual capabilities and should unfold a revolutionary vision of their roles. Obviously, such empowerment will reduce the vulnerable and masochistic view of femininity in all ways.

This is also identified by Walker's womanist theory which shows the women writers' engagement with written word as an avenue to expose and redress their second class position. This helps them to celebrate their physical, mental, emotional, and intellectual capabilities. The idea Walker creates of female writing corresponds to Woods' (2003) assertion that language expresses cultural views of gender, as well as reproduces them. Yet language is not static. Instead, one continuously changes language to reflect one's changing understanding of oneself and one's world (115). These writers, however, transgress the border of the unspeakable. The power of their language use strikes the culture that has striven so hard to make itself the teacher and trainer of women's language. As a result, they focus on gender as a social construct in relation to language, and how individuals' biology imposes different expectations from both male and female that develop into physiological and psychological constraints.

In the 1990s, Deborah Cameron and Jennifer Coates developed alternative approaches to gendered speech. Their contributions created avenues for further the research on language and gender in the patriarchal societies where language pattern is seen as a crucial element of cultural discourses. Cameron developed the 'Difference and Dominance approaches', while Coates identified four different approaches in *Women, Men and Language* (1993). In contrast with Jespersen's and Lakoff's approach to women's language which Cameron sees as the Dominance approach in *The Feminist Critique of Language* (1991), she also notices that there is an alternative approach that acknowledges how women use language in a different way from men. She sees this as the Difference approach as these elements are clearly noticed in the works of Luce Irigaray or Annie Leclerc. Cameron identifies in the

difference approach that if people can stop assessing things by male standards, the features now labelled 'trivial' and 'differential' will appear as 'women-centred' and 'supportive' (24).

Cameron believes that the combination of both approaches will help women regain the actual facts about the male and female use of language. With these two approaches, women are able to negotiate their powerlessness and also are presented as social beings being esteemed above the social conditionings placed on them within the patriarchal system. These two approaches have not only been used by several women writers who use language as an act of self-realisation and as a means to view gender and its limitations through their analysis of sexist language, the author of this study sees that the selected writers may have contributed to a general emancipation of women by the very act of writing, either consciously or unconsciously. Considering this from Annie Leclerc words in *Parole de Femme* (1974) in Cameron (1991), she argues that the female gender has been created and structured by men and the society to suite their own purpose:

Nothing exists that has not been made by man- not thought, not language, not words. Even now, there is nothing that has not been made by man, not even me: especially not me. We have to invent everything anew. Things made by man are not just stupid, deceitful and oppressive. More than anything else, they are sad, sad enough to kill us with boredom and despair. We have to invent a woman's word. But not 'of' woman 'about' woman, in the way that man's language speaks 'of' woman. Any woman who wants to use a language that is specifically her own, cannot avoid this extraordinary, urgent task: we must invent woman. It is crazy, I know. But it is the only thing that keeps me sane (74).

Seeing this as a form of challenge to women's restricted space in the man's world, Leclerc views that women's literature should entail feminine literature, very

feminine with its exquisite feminine sensitivity from the women's perspective and not from the masculine sensitivity that has defined the human race from the assumed man's 'truth'. Such truth has highlighted from the sexist stance and converted everything feminine into dirt, pain, duty, bitchiness, small-mindedness and servitude which invariably silence women and make the men vocal.

The same view is also expressed by Penelope Deutscher in *A Politics of Impossible Difference* (2002) in her observation of Luce Irigaray's works. She identifies that Irigaray suggests women have served as negative mirrors sustaining masculine identity. Cultural and historical understandings of the masculine identity have contrasted it to traditional representations of femininity, with femininity understood as an atrophy or lack of masculine qualities (11). This shows women as the 'other' which suggest them as being weak and the opposite of men in all aspects regarding language and culture. These women's identities are thus fashioned to suit the patriarchal system to the extent that their true natures are seen as unacceptable and morally shameful enough to be hidden in public.

In the 1990s, Jennifer Coates points out in *Language and Gender: A Reader* (1998) that while several studies have dealt with men and women talking in terms of phonological, morphological, syntactic or lexical studies, more works have also been done to show the findings based on conversational analysis. Coates sees language as being a 'deficit' which concurs with the notion of Lakoff that women's language is dichotomous in nature. Secondly, she identifies language as 'dominance' in nature. This sees the extension of the 'deficit' approach that gender difference in language use reflects power differences in society. Coates also views 'difference' as an avenue

to gendered speech which shows that men and women belong to different 'subcultures'. This is similar to Deborah Tannen's observation in *You Just Don't Understand, Men and Women In Conversation* (1990) about the differences she sees in conversational style between men (report talk) and women (rapport talk). Tannen reveals the differences in the ways in which men and women use language that while men use language as a form of independence, status identification and maintenance in an hierarchical social order, women use language to develop relationships and interaction. Coates' fourth observation sees language from a dynamic or a social constructionist approach. This shows a way of shifting gender or acting gender instead of being gendered. Mary Crawford affirms in *Talking Difference: On Gender and Language* (1995) that social constructionist approach of language identifies that talk is a power resource brought to bear in influencing other people, enlisting their help, offering companionship, protecting ourselves from their demands, saving face, justifying our behaviours, establishing important relationships and presenting ourselves as having the qualities that they (and we) admire (17). The issue of language and gender in a social constructionist framework that often generates lots of questions about gender along with the issues of race, class and age will be explored through the way characters interact in the following chapters.

In view of the difference in language, Julia T. Wood supports Nancy Henley's (1989) observation in *Gendered Lives: Communication, Gender and Culture* (2003) of how generic language reduces women's awareness that tends to result in people's perception of women as excluded or exceptions in communication rules. She sees that this affects the personal identity, and the perception of women's presence in various spheres of life. Jespersen, Lakoff and Wood's approach explore Freudian

psychoanalysis theory where gender is based on psycho-sexual development of an individual. Such observations reveal that as long as women are repressed through language, there will always be negative impressions of the female identity created as a result of male dominance.

Contrary to the 'difference and dominance' approaches which have been followed by the mentioned writers, Mary M. Talbot observes in *Feminism and Language* (2001) that none of the research in the 'difference and dominance' theories have been able to address how language, personal identity and social context interact or how that interaction sustains unequal gender relations. Such a lack of solution makes some researchers turn to poststructuralism in order to address the issue of gender and language. To researchers like Cameron, (2005); Coates (1995); Gastil, (1990); Hamilton, (1991); and Switzer (1990), language publicises the sexist stances in society whereby men are privileged within the socio-cultural application of gender. This proves to be part of the feminist research that notes how the lexicon and grammatical systems of English contains the exception, trivialisation and insults women are being characterised with. While some of the feminist researchers are interested in relating language to social realities, others treat language as a form of cultural activity which modify or corrects the stereotype usage. For example, taking the poststructuralist feminist approach into consideration, they see the issue of women's language and gender as an on-going process within the linguistic hierarchy which is liable to change. This is, as mentioned, reflected in the writers under analysis.

Benjamin Whorf identifies the function of language within a gendered society in *Language, Thought and Reality* (1976) that language is not neutral. It is not merely a vehicle which carries ideas, but rather a shaper of those ideas. In other words, people are defined through the way they live their gendered situations in the society which shows that gender is deeply ingrained in the social system, in the understanding of self and others within the communication domain. The women writers whose works are under scrutiny create scenarios which portray active engagement with women in the patriarchal cultural frameworks; women who seek freedom and equality, and women who dare to enter into the public sphere.

Rather than creating an alternative view to how women's language is identified and treated in the society, Walker is of the opinion that sexist language could still be used constructively by women and the society by seeing the capability in the female gender. Although in defining sexist language, Ann Weatherall, *Gender, Language and Discourse* (2002), sees it as a matter of not just the words used to describe women, but also how such words are used and to what ends they are being used:

Challenging sexism in language and making trouble with words can be an important feminist strategy to engender social change. However, it seems to me that the solutions offered to the problem of sexist language are somehow less important than the issue itself. One reason for this is that there is no simple relationship between linguistic forms and non- sexist language . . . (10).

Weatherall notes that although words can define, depreciate and demean women, the same words may also inspire resistance and rebellion against the negative meaning. Thus, sexist language should not just be thought of as constructing women as invisible or passive and silent. This reveals that silence can be used effectively

without having a negative connotation as many writers have portrayed it. In some respect, silence is another form of resistance to a domineering culture where the holders of such culture are always ready to checkmate the female activities.

Walker elaborates the view of female writers whose works recreate women culturally, mythically, socially, economically, financially and politically within the society that has limited their contributions. They recreate their self to feel powerful and highly valued individuals as a means of showing the female worth analysed in the character of Evaristi's Martha in *Mouthpieces*, or Munro's Marie in *Bold Girls*.

Also, Black and Coward in the same book (1998), explain that language participates in the social situations, and has an active role in the construction of its subjects' social status. Spender (1985) agrees that language is a weapon women writers have not been able to use extensively in their fight against sexism (52). Ekwierhoma (2003) confirms that "the woman writer's inability to use language to her own advantage is likely to obtain in a phallogentric society, where female artistry is often socially inhibited. This inhibition could therefore estrange her from the mainstream of writing and limit her contribution" (14). Apart from the corrective measure achieved by female creativity and writings, Dorothy Driver expresses her belief in *Feminist Literary Criticism* (1982) that such writings are genuine consciousness created by women to communicate to their audience. Driver thus asserts "literature as means of giving autonomous value to women's experience by helping women perceive the political, economic, and social expression to which women were subjugated as well as attempt to bring about new standards against which women would be measured (203). Such experiences and perspectives of women mandate

their inquiry into historical priority, universality and the overriding importance of patriarchy through their different writings. Therefore, this allows the study to show that the analysed female characters reject the idea that a woman has to put up with what the society and culture lays out for her.

This expression elaborates Walker's definition of womanism as seeing the capabilities in women. Writing gives women empowerment and freedom to think and feel. Freedom to think and feel are parts of the distinct features of the womanist ideology which allows mental, bodily and personal autonomy. Through such writings, female identity, female dignity, female protestation and feminine assertiveness aesthetics are explored. The analyses of the selected writings show that the writers present the survival of the fittest as they engage their female and male characters in language. This present them as writers capable of publicising that one is not born feminine or masculine, but acquisition of language through interaction plays an important role within different cultures that makes one a sexed subject.

Language however could either be an expressive or oppressive tool within the society which could determine the linguistic strength of a gender. McConnell-Ginet (1998) explains further that "using language is a socially situated action, it is clearly embedded in the same socio-cultural matrix that supports sexual bias in the work we do . . . the expectations we have of ourselves and others and so on" (199). Therefore, language in the society is introduced as a very powerful and significant indicator of status which will be analyzed during the course of this study.

While Lakoff (1975) identifies language itself as a tool of oppression because women's speech is often "tentative, powerless and trivial", Spender (1985) observes

that “historically, women have been excluded from the production of cultural forms, and language is after all, a cultural form and a most important one” (52). In fairly awkward terms, this means that language has been made by men, that they have used it for their own purposes. Spender however sees language and gender as being interwoven and interlinked by their correlative development through social and cultural practice.

Although this study gives more consideration to this assertion, it also explores their opposites to justify womanist view of females ‘capability’ according to Walker (1983). In *Talking Difference on Gender and Language* (1995), Mary Crawford identifies this as acting within a social constructionist framework. She agrees that women behave in a certain way not because of their sex, but because they are members of a particular distinct, culturally salient group who are placed in particular situations and interactions that enable certain behaviours and suppress others. She further asserts that “some girls and boys come to experience intimacy and autonomy differently because the gender system operating at the social, structural and interactional levels recreates the ideology of gender within individuals” (94).

How people speak and write exposes the kind of social beings they are. The problem is that women are marginalised in patriarchal societies. Hence, while men find language as a tool to social entry, women see it as an impossible objective, turning it into a tool of oppression. This reflects Spender’s point noted earlier about man-made language and also reinforces Cameron, Coates and Tannen’s exploration of written language in particular as an alien concept for women.

Language, much like gender, cannot be easily looked upon without reference to socio-cultural factors that determine one's perception of identity whether personal or national. In line with language creating one's identity, Helen Boden observes in *Contemporary Scottish Women Writers* (2000) that Scottish identity is often defined in terms of the country's past (of romance, defeat, industrialisation) (31). She does not clamour for a total dissociation from the past, but it should be seen as a form of continuity that will shape the present. Hence these various factors must be taken into consideration and investigated to some extent in any gender focused discourse analysis. These socio-cultural factors are noticeable in the works of the selected female writers to be used in the study. Many of the works produced by these women writers are their reflections of them as writers, as women and as characters in the larger societies. The female characters in their works are portrayed as multi-dimensional agents who no longer remain marginalized and voiceless. For example, in Julie Okoh's *Mannequins*, Mrs Adudu refuses to be subjugated by the cultural expectation which celebrates a man's infidelity within the African patriarchal society. At the end of the play she realises she has a brighter future without a man while she leaves the house to start a new life. This is also visible in Sue Glover's *The Seal Wife*, when Rona decides to leave the domestic sphere of being a mother and a wife. She sees it as being limited and voiceless within this culture; she wants her freedom rather than being an unhappy individual throughout her life because of cultural obligation.

In line with Okoh and Glover's view of the female ill treatment in the society, Buchi Emechata observes in *New York Times Book Review* (1990), the false female characterization in Chinua Achebe's work explores the socio-cultural treatment of

women in the Igbo community of Nigeria. Emechata criticises that “The good woman” in Achebe’s portrayal is the one who kneels down and drinks the dreg after the husband. In *The Arrow of God* (1964), when the husband is beating his wife, other women stand around saying “it’s enough, it’s enough” (42). In his view, that kind of a subordinate woman is the good woman.

Until recently, in some of the African societies, female children were mainly appreciated in cultural and economic terms because of their monetary value in terms of bride price. K. Uduehi narrates in *Pre- Occupation* (1973) the ordeal of the African mother in a poem “I Knew it was a Girl Again”. This is the experience of a woman who has given birth to another baby girl that is hardly recognised within the society. She narrates that:

What sex
Won’t you wait till the placenta is expelled
Before asking this sort of question?
And so I knew it was a girl
She would not have hesitated to shout!
Boy if it were,
No matter when the question was asked.
Yes, I was right
Another girl again my Lord
Maybe Thy will be done though in my own undoing (21).

In redressing this issue of female child, Mabel Segun, who is socially more aware in the study of women, shows her resentment in a poem of three lines about the African

male society through the strong creative language she employs. Segun in *Conflicts and other Poems* (1986) identifies that:

A woman is a person

Especially when she chairs

A committee of women.

Reading through this poem and other African women writers work such as Ifeoma Okoye, Zaynab Alkali, Ama Ata Aidoo, Zulu Sofola, Teressa Meniru, Efua T. Sutherland, Catherine Acholonu and so on, R. Solberg in *The Women of Black Africa*, Buchi Emechata (1983) recommends that one of the ways of correcting the faulty image of the African women is to look at words from the “inside”, in other words, those rendered by women (247).

Similarly in Scotland, there is the assumption that women writers share certain agendas and influences, and that they interrogate the space of Scotland in their own way through their language. Alison Lumsden and Aileen Christianson identify in *Contemporary Scottish Women Writers* (2000) that in the early 1970s, Ellie McDonald wrote poems in Scots that seems to be a threatened language in the privatised male domain. McDonald in *Monster* opines that the more she writes, the more she can communicate the language to other people.

To conclude, the works from West Africa and Scotland which will be analysed in the study highlight the exclusion of women from the public spheres, elaborates domesticity and publicise patriarchy. These three avenues, personal expressiveness, emotion and empathy are means through which Walker’s view of womanism allows these selected women writers to use their writings as an avenue to communicate with

other women in the society since writing makes up the collation of history. The female writers under analysis through their languages have tried to redeem women's lost histories in the literary domain and to attain self actualisation in their respective societies. To a large extent, these writers have been able to correct the bias undertone in the cultural description of women that reinforces them as decorative objects whose identity hinges on physical appeal and not what they contribute to the society positively.

It transpires from these selected plays that female writers' language is a means through which female dignity, femininity, protestation and feminine aesthetics are explored while the constraints affecting female creative impulse is discarded. Cameron (1998) observes that:

the great change that has crept into women's writing is, it would seem, a change of attitude. The woman writer is no longer bitter. She is no longer angry. She is no longer pleading and protesting as she writes. We are approaching, if we have not yet reached, the time when her writing will have no little or foreign influence to disturb it. She will be able to concentrate upon her vision without distraction from outside. The aloofness that was once within the reach of genius and originality is only now coming within the reach of ordinary women. . . (50).

Cameron's assertion made a decade ago, has been an influence in the works of female writers especially in the selected plays to be considered. The use of language both in oral or folktale and written form in these works has created assertive, determined and actualised female roles. For women writers to have been able to use these two forms constructively and effectively show their dynamicity, flexibility, capability and adjustability to the 'male domain'. Such use of poetic lines and oral forms embrace satirical, overt political and cultural activism that depicts women's

plights and collective ethos as well as tools for castigating built in social structures which Modupe Kolawole views in *Womanism and African Consciousness* (1997) as the need of feminine gender by the female poets and dramatists.

Apart from writing in Scots and West African, the oral narratives and the folklores in these female writings depict their connections with their respective cultures which elaborate their richness of imagination. However, be it the oral or written form of language all these works shows women's dynamicity, flexibility and adjustability to the 'male domain' which allows female creativity to be assumed as a threat to patriarchy especially in West African societies. Showalter sees in *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelist From Bronte To Lessing* (1977) that women are regarded generally as 'sociological chameleons' who take on the class, lifestyle and culture of male counterparts. She argues further about women constituting themselves as a subculture within the framework of a larger society and unifying themselves by values, conventions, experiences and behaviours infringing on each individual. The next chapter discusses the works of Liz Lochhead and Ama Ata Aidoo with the purpose of illustrating Walker's concept of womanish capability.

CHAPTER THREE

VICTIMS OF IDENTITY CRISIS: SOCIO-CULTURAL AND WOMANIST POINTS OF VIEW IN AMA ATA AIDOO'S *THE DILEMMA OF A GHOST* (1974) AND ANOWA (1970) LIZ LOCHHEAD'S *MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS GOT HER HEAD CHOPPED OFF* (1989) AND *EDUCATING AGNES* (2008).

LIZ LOCHHEAD

Liz is a Scottish writer born in 1947. She studied at Glasgow School of Art. Her collections include *Memo for Spring* (1972), *Blood and Ice* (1982), *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* (1989), *Dracula* (1989), *Cuba* (1997), *Medea* (2000), *Educating Agnes* (2008) and so on. Liz was awarded an honorary degree by the University of Edinburgh in 2000, made a poet Laureate of Glasgow in 2005, she became Scots Makar in 2011. Her works frequently focuses on girlhood, motherhood and National identity.

Synopsis of Liz Lochhead's plays.

Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off

Liz Lochhead dramatise the religious and political history of Scotland from the female point of view in *Mary Queen of Scot Got Her Head Chopped Off* published in 1989. Lochhead showcases the rule of two queens, Queen Elizabeth of England and Queen Mary of Scotland, in the sixteenth century with various expectations and limitations confronting women both in private and public spheres.

Educating Agnes

The play presents an unmarried middle-aged Arnolphe who distrusts women. As the play proceeds, he decides to marry his ward, the orphaned Agnes who is brought up in a convent and ignorant in the ways of the grown-ups. This makes Arnolphe thinks she is innocent and naive. Arnolphe only makes his intention known to his friend Chrysalde who advices him against his actions. While he is away on a short trip, Agnes falls in love with young Horace who makes her see femininity and marriage from a different perspective from that of Arnolphe. As both lovers unknowingly disclose their intentions to Arnolphe, he cunningly tries to stop them from seeing each other but this later backfires on him.

AMA ATA AIDOO

Ama was born in 1940 in the Central region of Ghana. She is a daughter of a chief who has the opportunity to have western education. She attended Wesley Girls High School in Cape Coast before she proceeded to University of Ghana, Lagon. She is a Ghanaian writer who places the role of African women in modern society at the heart of her works. Her works include, *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1964), *No Sweets Here* (1970), *Anowa* (1970), *Our Sister Killjoy* (1979). She is a writer who believes in African identity which is often seen from a female perspective. Ama has won many awards from her various categories of works such as fiction, drama, poetry, essays, letters and criticism that uses women in the process of change.

Synopsis of Ama Ata Aidoo's plays

The Dilemma of a Ghost

The play centres on Ato Yawson, a Ghanaian who returns back to Africa with an American bride, Eulalie, after he completes his studies in the United States. This is a play that spreads its actions within a year from the prelude scene to the end of the play, Aidoo presents Eulalie as a woman in constant search of voice, different from the African female who are marginalised and oppressed within the society. At the end, both Eulalie and Ato become victims within the African society as Eulalie is not ready to imbibe the African ways and Ato is cut in between two different worlds.

Anowa

Aidoo presents a strong and wilful female character, Anowa, who remains unmarried six years after her puberty at the beginning of the play. She finally gets a man, Kofi Ako, of her choice after refusing so many suitors that came to seek her hand in marriage. This play is filled with many disappointments. Anowa's parents are disappointed by her choice; she leaves her town and promises never to be back but to make something positive out of Kofi Ako. After some hardships, they both become successful through trade in hide and skin, but remain barren. Despite Anowa's efforts to make her husband marry another wife, it becomes visible that Kofi Ako is impotent. The play ends in tragedy to present the strange fate of a couple.

Introduction

In the plays discussed in this chapter, Liz Lochhead and Ama Ata Aidoo unravel women's collective imagination in a multi-faceted psychic replay of myth and history. Such an approach offers an opportunity for reconstruction of female discourse as both authors' use of dramatic language problematize the positioning of female characters in socio-cultural hierarchy. There is a need to resituate the socio-cultural ideology that affect the authors' creation of female characters in these plays as well as their own positioning in socio-political histories in Scotland and Ghana so as not to consider their works in isolation. This is because both writers create female characters who provide important insight into women's experiences in very different historic moments. The analyses of Liz Lochhead's *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* (in further text: *MQS*) (1989) and *Educating Agnes* (2008), and Ama Ata Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1974) and *Anowa* (1970) will focus on the formal/informal, active/passive, rigid/flexible and public/domestic linguistic dichotomies, embedded in the construction of female characters in these plays. Benefits and the dangers of either acquiring or rejecting 'masculine' forms of language will also be discussed as Robin Lakoff suggests in *Who Are These Men Talking About* (1998):

... a girl is damned if she does, damned if she does not. If she refuses to talk like a lady, she is ridiculed and subjected to criticism as unfeminine: if she does learn, she is ridiculed as unable to think clearly, unable to take part in a serious discussion: in some sense, as less than fully human. These two choices which have to be less than a woman or less than a person- (sic) are highly painful (243).

Lakoff refers to the humiliation women experience in society if they either learn or refuse to learn the so-called 'public' language as a prerequisite for the cultural

acceptability. This idea is explored through the analysis of two different categories of women which Lochhead and Aidoo create in their plays. These include those characters who take on male attributes with unforeseen consequences and those who remain within culturally clear guide about their sexual and traditional female roles. The latter is seen by Alice Walker (1984) as the evidence of women's cultural capability and assertiveness in the society that has rendered them powerless through their language use (62). The plays in this chapter can therefore be analysed from two different perspectives which are from the womanist and cultural views that depicts how different generations of women in some societies deal with conflicts that come their ways.

These plays reveal the interconnectedness between two different perspectives and how women are treated with contempt and silence due to domestic cultural expectations within the society. Aidoo and Lochhead present readers with a crippled life of female loneliness, back-breaking labour and the desperate search for a voice either as a child or an adult female. Some of the female characters in the plays are crushed by their use of language whereby they are physically and mentally strewn with societal imbalance, emotionally battered and linguistically victimised through the oppressive sexist language and social system that calls for silent women with their banishment to the domesticity.

Unlike Erik Erikson's observation in *Identity and Life Cycle* (1959) that explains the stage of intimacy versus isolation which happens between the age of twenty and forty five years when the identity versus role confusion stage is coming to an end, these two writers question if people only search for identity during their adolescent years. This is because as women in patriarchal societies, bio-psycho-social forces are at work

which allows the female individuals unable to establish their own identities that create a sense of isolation and sometimes make them sacrifice beyond their abilities in order to align with socio-cultural norms.

The two writers are fully aware that female views are usually dismissed and are often not recognised at all, which allows them create some of their female characters. Eulalie, Agnes, Elizabeth and Anowa's language uses are distinctively different; their characterisations clash with Adrienne Rich's assertion in *On Lies, Secret and Silence* (1980) that woman's language cannot manage to mean what they say, much less achieve success in meaning more. Despite some of these female characters acting in line with Rich's assertion at the beginning of the plays, some grow out of their inhibition even though they are destroyed within the process to become targets of patriarchy. Considering the four plays under analysis from Walker's womanist perspective, they may be interpreted as re-creation of history for the purpose of changing the historical displacement of women as beings, highlighting the differences between the public and private, sexual and creative roles of women within the societies.

Lochhead's *MQS*⁵ traces back the history of female dislocation within the historical presentation of different generations. The play not only deals with the dramatic presentation of Queen Mary of Scotland's life from a female perspective, it explores different level of marginalisation of women within Scottish history, within British feminist history and within nationalist debates. As some of these histories have been

⁵*MQS* was produced by Communicado in 1987 at the Lyceum Studio in Edinburgh to mark the 400th anniversary of Queen Mary of Scots, who died in 1547.

suppressed or misrepresented, Lochhead's use of dramatic language in the play makes for a contemporary read, more than other historical presentations by writers such as Nancy Bryson Morrison's biography of Mary Stuart and Edwin Muir's 1940s exploration from the patriarchal perspectives. Ksenija Horvat observes in *Cats on the Hot Tin Roof* (1999) that Lochhead's version of Mary departs from conventional portrayals, although the play on the whole remains sympathetic towards its heroine. Lochhead herself notes on various occasions that having come from the Church of Scotland perspective; she found it intriguing during rehearsals for Communicado's production that those cast members who were Catholic had a different attitude towards Mary's character. While she was brought up to believe that Mary was a dangerous and negative figure, it was to her amazement that Catholics in Scotland still connected with Mary Stuart's iconography and saw her as a royal martyr, the representative of the God on Earth, and a religious representation of Stella Maris. In her play, Lochhead redresses the roles that women have assumed throughout the history and in contemporary society which presents the audience with the notion of split subject inherent in both female protagonists. Peter Zenzinger views Lochhead's *MQS* in *Scottish Theatre Since the Seventies* (1991) as a play that underlines the problems of women in power, especially difficulty in overcoming indoctrinated ideas of female submissiveness using the dramatic device of having the roles of queens and serving maid played in turn by the same actress (128) . The doublings reveal the dichotomies between a child and adult, the queen and commoner and a victor and victims that results in frequent identity shifts throughout the play. While this identity shift remains unresolved at the end of the play, it offers an audience an insight into a broadening gap between personal and public spheres that remains in place to date.

This gap is also noticeable in Aidoo's *Anowa*, based on the Ghanaian folktale of the 19th century. Such folktales are made up of exclusively oral traditions, and indeed Ananse himself was synonymous with skill and wisdom in speech which became peculiar and prominent among Ashanti people's culture. There are many variants to Ananse's story in Ghanaian folktale, but Aidoo uses her tale to sympathise with the plights of women, albeit in an ironic way, and presents a new type of heroine who is determined to change the existing female stereotypes. Aidoo presents to her readers a wilful young beauty who refuses all marriage proposals arranged by her parents because she wants a man of her own dream and choice without anybody choosing the life she wants for her. Against her parents' wish, she marries a man disregarded by the society because of his laziness. When her mother, Badua complains about Anowa's choice of husband, it leads to an argument between the two which depicts a mother's heartbreak, the societal view of her choice of husband and the possible repercussion of her strong-willed action:

BADUA: I am in disgrace so suck your teeth at me. (silence) other women
certainly have happier tales to tell about motherhood. (silence) I
think I am just an unlucky woman.

ANOWA: Mother, I do not know what is wrong with you.

BADUA: And how would you know what is wrong with me? Look here Anowa,
marriage is like a piece of cloth . . .

ANOWA: I like mine and it is none of your business.

BADUA: And like cloth, its beauty passes with wear and tear.

ANOWA: I do not care, mother. Have I not told you that this is to be my
marriage and not yours?...

BADUA: It's up to you, my mistress who knows everything. But

remember, my lady- when I am too old to move, I shall still
be sitting by these walls waiting for you to come back with
your rags and nakedness (17).

While Badua succeeds in publicising the continuous changes that occur in marriage and a woman's life to her daughter in their argument, Anowa shows her determination and zeal to make something positive out of the 'this fool, this good-for-nothing cassava-man, this watery male of all watery males' (15) he is about to marry. The review of *Anowa* in *African Theatre Ensemble in a Toronto Stagefest* (October 10-26, 2003) observes that Anowa underscored the fact that every woman should be free to move in the direction she so desire without any inhibition from parents and the society at large. The production directed by Modupe Olaogun presented young Anowa played by Debbie Y. Nichols in a well-orchestrated dance performance brings the past into the present and provides a link between the two. While the performance reiterates the issue of colonialism and slavery, Anowa craves a shift from the abuse of human beings and the exploitation of people for material gains which took the production to its highest level in Toronto.

Lochhead and Aidoo share a similar non-naturalistic, often ironic, presentation style and the way in which they construct dramatic action. The use of drums, chorus, and music in the production of *Anowa* helps to provide a rich and diverse group from the Caribbean, Africa and the Diaspora with their organised choreography. Likewise, In *Scotnotes: Liz Lochhead's Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* (2000), Margery Palmer McCulloch describes this approach as eclectic in the sense that it makes use of a variety of presentational styles such as expressionistic, epic, storytelling, anachronistic, breaking down the fourth wall, direct- to-the audience

style of presentation. One of the dramatic devices they both often use is Bertolt Brecht's 'verfremdungseffekt' which allows readers to actively engage in a critical relationship with the play, refocus on the message of the play, and shatter the illusion of realism and to consciously revision old stories. Lochhead dramatises this effect through the character of John Knox in the play that gives readers the opportunity of thinking afresh about what is happening and to question opinions and actions. In the 1987 original production by Communicado Theatre, Knox is portrayed as an abusive man who sees women as being evil, unintelligent and dependent on men, while he also views Catholicism as a way of revering women through the Virgin Mary within the religious realm while he also views Catholicism as corrupt, decadent and profoundly dangerous. This is different from 2009 Lyceum production directed by Tony Cownie, where Liam Brennan played a detached but fair John Knox.

Lochhead creates a distancing effect through La Corbie's poetic tributes to Mary's spiritual mother as a means of re-evaluating Mary's position in Scottish history. This helps prepare the audiences' minds to question the relationship between myth and truth. Adrienne Scullion notices in *Contemporary Scottish Women Writers* (2000) that Lochhead's *MQS* has emerged as a centre-piece in subsequent dramatic and critical considerations of the relationships between history and historiography, national identity and nationalism, and gender identity and feminism (96). Lochhead's engagement in nationalist, colonialist and imperialist issues, as identified by Scullion, makes her comparable with Ama Ata Aidoo whose works also retell the issues identified above. The way in which Lochhead dramatises *MQS* mirrors Liz Yorke's term 'feminist history' in *Impairment Voices: Subversive Strategies in Contemporary Women's Poetry* (1991) that the history written by women will not be

‘true’ history but will be reconstructed, remembered out of the exclusions and negations of patriarchy, and will be written by those who play out their lives ‘between symbolic systems, in the interstices offside’ (10). In the way that Walker’s theory encourages the reclaiming of history, Lochhead’s portrayal of history similarly aims to rewrite the lost female myths and to re-present femininity in a manner that echoes the earlier tradition of oral storytelling. This also presents Lochhead’s mistrust of standardised histories which represent women in fixed and stereotypical manners. The fact that the story is told in a form that moves away from historic facts and relies on popular folklore and on fictionalization of historic fact suggests to the audience that the presentation and interpretation of history presented on stage can be changed based on the writer’s and storyteller’s perspective.

In relation to Yorke’s view, both Lochhead and Aidoo are concerned with the ways in which femininities are constructed, perceived and performed both in oral and written forms. Similar to Lochhead’s deconstruction of socio-political histories in *MQS*, Aidoo rewrites the familiar story her mother told her from the Ghanaian oral tradition to present the female figure who is determined and assertive. In *MQS*, Lochhead explores themes of power struggles, the longing for love, envy, female vulnerability and religious bigotry. These themes are intrinsically linked throughout the play, exemplified by the character of La Corbie whose lines reveal the dynamism and truism in Scottish history, enabling the audiences to create their own personal “his/herstories”. She is depicted as an ever present character who serves as a constant reminder of the Scottish cultural tradition through the songs she renders from the 16th century. Lochhead not only uses the form of the traditional oral balladry to expose the rivalry between the two queens, their curiosity to know about each other and the

difficulties they experience in their attempt to rule as female leaders in strong patriarchal societies, but also uses La Corbie's role to revise the history and the positioning of women in the standardised historical accounts. The Communicado production in 1987 directed by Gerard Mulgrew, is set in a circus ring where animated and ballad with live music and dance is used to present the events surrounding the fate of Mary Queen of Scots which is also buttressed by La Corbie's crow-like narration.

La Corbie's role played by Myra Mcfadyen, is similar to Aidoo's portrayals of the Old Man and Old Woman in *Anowa* who serve as the link between the play and the audience by reiterating events in the play and the historical conflicts that occurred between new Ghanaian nation and colonial powers in their respective claims for new identity. Vincent Odamtten observes in *The Art of Ama Ata Aidoo: Polylectics and Reading against Neocolonialism* (1994) that in her revaluation of Ghana's modern history Aidoo's brings together the public-political and the private-political and underscores the necessity of viewing *Anowa* in its historical specificity, a complex interaction of the issues of gender, economics, and politics within the context of ideological struggle (77). The Old Man and Old Woman not only expose the hypocrisy of socio-political history, but also personal politics that happens within the family, whereby Anowa and Kofi Ako have to deal with their marital issues. This is synonymous to Walker's view that family microcosm represents a society where the political, economical, and spiritual platforms dictate the treatment of women. In University of Ilorin Performing Arts production on the 11th May, 2002, directed by Titi Niyi, the Old Man played by Femi Awoyale, showed men are more willing to

concede gender roles and Old Woman played by Opeyemi Disu, showed women as the advocate of old gender roles within the society.

While Anowa yearns for true companionship based on equality, love and bond in her marriage, Kofi Ako is blinded by his guilt and greed to further his business with white men. The couple's relationship shows hierarchy supported by heterosexual imperatives both in the private and public spheres. While such a relationship also hinders the male characters from accepting their guilt and weaknesses, it makes the woman feel guilty of questioning what she has done wrong and what she can do to improve her domestic status. This play serves as a desire to develop a new type of domestic and psychological drama. This new subgenre focuses on emphasizing of the socio-political, socio-familial and historio-cultural development within a patriarchal society where male dominance in heterosexual relationship is reflected in different ways. Woods (2003) noted in *Gendered Lives* that these different ways include among others a division of labour, pattern of influence and decision making, and violence between partners.

Likewise in most recent adaptation of Moliere's *School For Wives* (1906), *Educating Agnes*, Lochhead critiques domestic and psychological ignorance through old men's vanity and self-deception. *Educating Agnes* is a play that displays the extremes of jealousy on the surface, and exposes the battle of sexes, and the institution of marriage as a social construct, based on the economic contract, that makes it acceptable for an older man to exploit a young woman. Another cleverly constructed analogy is that of the conflict between male/colonial/powerful vs female/colonized/powerless, made even more evident by the casting of a black actress in Agnes's role in the original production of the play. This reading has been

masked over in the subsequent productions where Agnes's role has been played by a Caucasian actress, which refocused the theme of exploitation away from postcolonial discourse and back to the battle of sexes arena. By doing this, Lochhead seems to indicate clearly that her critique is marginalisation of not only colonized female body, but also of any female stereotype, regardless of class, race and culture.

Indeed, the play looks beyond the cultural expectations made of women that are eager to preserve submissive nature of a young wife by confining her to the lifetime of ignorance and domestic chores. The female gender continues to be portrayed as marginalized in this play in an exposé of the submissive 'other'. However, Lochhead also introduces the twist in a tale by portraying Agnes as feisty and vocal, instead of coming to terms with her negative situation Agnes plays upon the image of ignorant domesticated female in order to break away from her confinement. Walker's womanist theory does not only recognise female domestic chores as forms of feminine aesthetics, she also sees them as the powerful source of female imagination, creativity, connection and as well as the source of potential reconciliation between traditional women's roles and their true potential. By the end of *Educating Agnes*, Agnes remains innocently chirpy but the mask of ignorance is stripped as the shackles that tie her to her ageing patron are unfettered.

The character of Arnolphe, middle-aged and weary of worldly women, announces his intention to marry a young orphan, his ward Agnes, who up to that point has been educated in a convent. In many ways Lochhead's Arnolphe resembles Moliere's original character, he is a wealthy misanthrope and hypocrite, an epitome of a new merchant class feeding upon the powerlessness of the poor. While Lochhead does not deviate from Moliere's original too much by presenting Arnolphe as a voice of a

ruling class at its leisure to shape and dispose of a spouse as it sees fit, Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost* shows both genders' expectations of what constitutes an acceptable female behaviour. Ato Yawson's family members expect Eulalie to be feminine, cultured and domesticated, far removed from the western model of the feminine which they seem to stereotype as manly, vulgar, and nonchalant. Lochhead and Aidoo seem to create a new perception of femininity by means of linguistic registers that their heroines use. In *MQS*, Lochhead offers a variety of registers that are always in dichotomous relationship formal and informal, standard and colloquial. McCulloch (2000) asserts that:

Lochhead's range of Scots language is most exciting. She explains further that Lochhead's mixture of languages and language registers present in *Mary Queen of Scots* is because the play is about Scotland and England (16).

McCulloch's observation reiterates the study's claim that in *MQS* Scots seems to be perceived as effeminate language, feeding the stereotype of once perceived inequality between Scots and English. Hence, if Scots is seen as informal in Lochhead's play, its use implies resistance and subversiveness. Lochhead uses the mixture of French, Scots and English and although Mary's inaccurate use of Scots depicts her as marginalised both by her Scottish subjects and by her more powerful cousin, the audience are encouraged to empathise with her throughout the play as she repeatedly fails to create a link to her national identity in relation to history, culture and society. This is shown in Act One scene two of *MQS* where Ambassador 1 and Ambassador 4 address Queen Elizabeth and Queen Mary respectively:

AMBASSADOR 1: (To Elizabeth) To the most esteemed royal court of
Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth of England from

His Majesty King Philip of Spain whose hand in marriage

. . . (13).

On the contrary, Ambassador 4 uses the mixture of French and English when addressing Queen Mary:

AMBASSADOR 4: (To Mary) Felicitations, Madame la plus belle Reine Marie

d'Ecosse from Catherine de' Medici, la reine de France, Mere

du roi Charles, who wishes you consider her son Henri de

Valois. (13).

While Elizabeth is addressed in English, her native tongue, Mary's bilingual and one may claim dubious origins are emphasized by the French ambassador's use of French and English. The language difference is significant for the development of the relationship between the two queens. While Elizabeth uses 'superior' formal language as a clear indication that she is more powerful, by this she also places herself in a masculine role, that of a female King. This in turn signifies an exclusion of the feminine from the political realm. The fact that Elizabeth uses formal expression proficiently, launches her into the political consciousness but only after her defeminisation has been completed. In this sense defeminisation seems to signal her knowledge and involvement as she takes full authority of her court.

The facts that Elizabeth is able to use the public/formal language of power proficiently seems to indicate Lochhead's rejection of the notion that language is a tool of male-dominated culture and that it constructs the female identity as powerless. Instead, she explores the possibilities of language, both written and spoken, becoming a tool of empowerment for women. Not only does Lochhead use the duality of language to construct female identity as both powerful and powerless in *MQS*, she also shows the differences between the two queens and Elizabeth's

rejection to accept her cousin's reign, her mixed culture and her subtle nature. Adrienne Scullion observes in *Contemporary Scottish Women Writers* (2000) that *MQS* energises the discourse of nostalgia through a distinctive dramaturgical iconoclasm and sophisticated linguistic usage that set out a political feminist intent to interpret the past and draw out a new and radical agenda for the contemporary audience.

Meanwhile, Aidoo's use of language in *The Dilemma Of A Ghost* presents Eulalie as an African lady in the Diaspora who has no knowledge of Ato Yawson's, her husband's, culture or language, because she does not belong to his tribe. Eulalie's use of language is more assertive, masculine and determined which the husband's society sees as foreign to their cultural belief, but Aidoo depicts such language as an emblematic aspect of national identity. The review of an African-Irish theatre company Arambe production (21st April, 2007) identifies that the play raises big questions about integration, immigration and cultural identity, issues of idealisation and devaluation, closeness and distance, hope and nostalgia, speech and expression, mutuality and language. Although rich in sound and visual style enhanced by the casts, the production undermines the feminist theme of the text, places Ato Yawson as the central character while Eulalie is treated without sympathy which shows lack of clear reading. Through this play, Aidoo draws attention the problems that arise from the complex articulations of gender, race and class issues within the neo-colonial framework that is embedded in the choice of language.

Although Lochhead uses language as a form of national identity, it also reveals the hierarchical position of most characters within the society. The use of the colloquial, informal and flexible Scots versus the standard, formal and rigid English language

mirrors J. Fisherman's observation in *Language and Nationalism* (1976) as 'constructive self-identification' (4) in language choice. For example, this constructive self-identification can be explored from the characterisation of both heroines in *MQS* as they use linguistic and visual opposites in the play to elaborate their different identities and monarchical powers. Mary's dynamicity helps her to assimilate the norms of Scots speech easily despite her French background while Elizabeth maintains the rigidity of the discourse of power. Elizabeth problematizes Scots' authenticity, which is shown in her conversation with Marian about Mary's identity:

ELIZABETH: What are her other amusements?

MARIAN: She writes poems apparently...

ELIZABETH: Poems? In English?

MARIAN: In French. And in 'Scots'. (Scornful laughs) (17-18)

Differences in language and switches in characterisation used by Lochhead throughout the play reflect Robin Lakoff's idea in *The Feminist Critique of Language* (2005) that shifting from one language to another requires special awareness to the nuances of social situations special alertness to possible disapproval (243). This displays the control of the dominant culture over the less privileged, suppressive, submissive and unequal category that is not recognised as an equal 'partner' in communication. In other words, dominant culture only recognises the suppressed culture if it uses the dominant culture's language, but as the latter can never make this language their own completely, they can never be seen as equal. Lochhead's portrayal of Mary arouses pity due to her lack of knowledge about British politics. This exposes Mary's longings, disorientation, boredom, and imagination through her bewildered responses to her new situation:

MARY: Three years! I mind and the Marie soot on deck

Chitterin' in oor fine French frocks peerin' through

The glaur o' the air ae glimpse o' my kingdom!

Three years and I havena seen it yet!

...

(16-17).

The playwright exposes Mary's fear and sense of isolation felt by all women who dare to enter into the public sphere to assert themselves as leaders. Mary becomes an embodiment of nature and culture as she is considered to be traditionally inferior, substandard and weaker both in mind and body which make her to be seen as the 'other' woman. Her situation reveals how 'other' women become outcasts when they try to assert themselves by using their public voices.

However, Mary's isolated position disallows her from finding a solution to the personal and political problem of her kingdom and of John Knox. While Elizabeth's charisma and language shows her disregard for the Scottish tradition in relation to the reign of her cousin in Scotland, Mary in her loneliness is frustrated with her court. Elizabeth refers to Mary as 'our bloody dead sister's widower?'(13), referring to Mary's connections to Bloody Mary's violent reign, as well as her foreign Catholic inclinations – in Elizabeth's view, Mary the cousin and Mary the elder sister become interchangeable, but at the same time they also signify the notion of false sisterhood. Lynda Mugglestone observes in *Liz Lochhead: Styles, Status, Gender and Identity* (1993) that:

conflicting patterns of language serve to signify the wider issues in distance and solidarity... language use in Scotland is therefore highly complex in the schema of differentiation it offers, and it is presumably this circumstance which leads Lochhead to assert the supreme value of

Scots as a 'language for multiplicity of registers'(verse 93) and for the foregrounding of social, gendered and geographical divisions, the modulations of voice and register which inevitably accompany every exchange. It is certainly an aspect which Lochhead herself explores and exploits, to a considerable extent in her own work, drawing upon the emblematic aspects of language as a symbol of national identity in *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off...*(94).

Mugglestone believes that language and gender are biased in Scottish intellectual and cultural life and are used to inhibit the entrance of the feminine into the public-political realm. It is therefore not surprising that it is precisely women playwrights in Scotland who actively question and search for national identity, and equals it to personal identity as a means of eliminating stereotypical representations of female characters on page and on stage.

Lochhead and Aidoo use their characters' voices as forms or links to the national identity in order to portray their connection with history, culture and the society in general. Mary's portrayal of dislocated identity is similar to the problem Eulalie encounters in *The Dilemma of A Ghost* where the culture she feels will accommodate her seems too alien to accept or tolerate her. The Arambe review of the production identifies with the present day Ireland in which inward migration is bringing issues of ethnic and national identity to the fore, but the problem with this production is that it underplays the text's feminist view whereby women's audibility are undermined. As the play appeals to the sentiment of the historical connection between Africans in Africa and Africans in the Diaspora, it proves to be a modern-day culture clash. An argument starts after a graduation program between an African born American wife, Eulalie and an African husband, Ato Yawson. Eulalie does not see that a woman graduating from the University is special because of the socio-cultural domestic

expectations of a woman regardless of her level of education. Ato sees the acquisition of such qualification as a thing of prestige.

During this argument, the difference between a typical African woman who is still ignorant to remain silent no matter the way she is treated and the African woman in the Diaspora is analysed by these two characters. While Eulalie sees African women as people who are passive in their actions and creation of their femininity, Ato refers to them as people who are self conscious of their every action. Ato, as a typical African man is culturally bound, but he tries to imbibe the western way of life because he is married to an African American woman and he tries to resolve what he sees is an unequal position – a colonized man married to a colonial woman. This shows in his opinion about having children which does not portray the African male culture that values children even more than the wife in most cases:

ATO: 'Lalie, don't you believe me when I tell you it's O.K.? I love you, Eulalie, and that's what matters. Your own sweet self should be O.K. for any guy. And how can a first- born child be difficult to please? Children, who wants them? In fact, they make me-jealous. I couldn't bear seeing you love someone else better than you do me. Not yet, darling, and not even my own children.

EU: You really sure?

ATO: Aren't you the sweetest and loveliest things in Africa and America rolled together? My darling, we are going to create a paradise, with or without children.

EU: Darling, some men do mind a lot.

ATO: [Vehemently] look at me, we shall postpone having children for as long

as you would want (4).

Ato's confession of love and affection is tested with time when faced with the decision of choosing between his tradition and his wife. Culture and neo-colonial oppression seem to be at work as far as Ato's decision is concerned; he finds it difficult to confront the situation he faces, therefore becoming a victim himself with complications not fully resolved at the end of the play. While Ato would have loved to continue the western lifestyle with Eulalie, his culture does not permit him to do so as he is seen as negatively weak. These are mostly done through the use of language which Aidoo displays with a great knowledge of informal and formal language that helps to reconstruct some of the social views of femininity and to deconstruct that of masculinity.

To consider the way in which Aidoo employs the language of the play, it becomes more like structured local English as the play progresses. Most of Ato's reply to Eulalie corresponds with the present authors view about Aidoo's use of structured local English language, such as 'Aren't you the sweetest and liveliest thing in Africa and America' (4). This is also observed in the choice of words given to the two women during their discussion about Eulalie.

Although these women's conversations show Eulalie's unwillingness to adopt her husband's culture and their societal view of marriage, this also explores the dramatic cultural diversities in Aidoo's use of language. It is a play that comments on the conflicts in Ghanaian society, these two women elaborate on Ato's dilemma in a changing society, which contributes to the socio-cultural conflict that leads to Eulalie's victimisation. Aidoo employs these two female characters to expose the expectations of an African woman whom despite the presence of servants in the

house are still regarded as a slave to the husband, the children and the culture that devalues femalehood. This culture makes woman toil from morning till night both in the domestic and public spheres. While discussing Eulalie, the women's language depicts this observation in their lines that a woman can only gain her place at home and society if she has children; else she becomes the loser in marriage. Lloyd W. Brown observes in *Modern African Drama* (2002) that:

the Ghanaian women in the chorus demonstrate conflicts, or a sense of alternative possibilities, which are intrinsic to their own situation as African women- especially on the issue of childbearing and motherhood. The first woman is childless, and she repeatedly bemoans the misfortunes of women like herself while recalling the wisdom of the ancestors in extolling the virtues of motherhood. The second woman whose house is teeming with children, envies the childless woman's freedom from this "curse" as she describes childbearing (585).

While Aidoo gives the two women a chance to see advantages from each other's situation, Eulalie is left with no choice. As a complete stranger in the Odumna clan, her strong and determined individualism is used against her throughout the play. As the playwright tries to capture the benefits of childlessness and childbearing through these two characters, she thus highlights some problems associated with motherhood through Esi Kom's plight. Esi Kom loses everything she has worked for in order to educate his son but at the end wallows in poverty due to her son's indecision, fear and disorientation of a changing world. Ato becomes a central problem in the female character's life as they lose their identities while trying to please him. His cultural confusion also reveals Eulalie's problem with his family and the society that views woman's fertility as a way of securing a place in marriage. At first, Ato makes Eulalie enjoys every minute of her relationship with him because he is ever willing to satisfy her and make her happy, but it changes.

The audiences in Michael Walling's production (2007) see the performance as a triangular relation between mother, son and wife with the potential for hellish stress in any situation. However, immediately after he announces his marriage to Eulalie, the situation changes. Eulalie is confronted with feminine cultural discrimination. All the members of the family become unimpressed by Ato's decision to marry a woman from western culture; a woman without an African tribe; whose name 'Eulalie' does not portray the African Ghanaian culture and a woman who is believed to be of the slave generation in the western country.

Eulalie is not only seen as a stranger because she is alien to Ato's culture, but also given the name 'stranger- girl' which is associated with the plight of a barren woman by the two women – gossips. These women believe that such behaviours like a woman smoking, drinking, or public display of emotion are alien to their culture to them a woman should always be the gullible quiet type that the culture demands as a form of obedience to the social taboos and norms. Aidoo's creation of Eulalie's strong character is a way of reducing the female stereotypes in male's work and society where there are dictated expectations for women. Eulalie however has the ability to reject these subjugating cultural positions that makes women become victims in the society, thus she asserts herself as someone who is able to think and make choices clearly in society. The first woman pities her condition of childlessness because of the societal treatment towards a barren woman since she is also barren:

1ST W: Barren! . . .

If it is real barrenness,

Then, oh stranger-girl,

Whom I do not know,

I weep for you
For I know what it is
To start a marriage with barrenness.
You ought to have kept quiet
And crouched in your mother's hearth
Wherever that is-
Yes with your machine that cook
And you machines that sweep.
They need people.
My people have a lusty desire
To see the tender skin
On top of a child's scalp
Rise and fall with human life
Your machines, my stranger- girl,
Cannot go on an errand
They have no hands to dress you when you are dead . . .
But you have one machine to buy now
That which will weep for you, stranger- girl you need that most.
For my world
Which you have run to enter
Is most unkind to the barren.
And for you –
Who shall talk for the stranger?
My daughter or my sister,
Whom I have never set y eyes upon,
You will cry until your throat is dry
And your eyes are blind with tears.
Yes, my young woman, I shall remember you.

I shall remember you in the hours of the night –

In my sleep, In my sleepless sleep (35-36).

Aidoo's portrayal of women's loneliness, the treatment and the societal perception of a barren woman through Eulalie therefore allows a sense of true sisterhood. Although not directly nor physically, the first woman empathises with Eulalie, she feels her pain, gives her solace with her words of encouragement and piece of advice in order for her to secure a place in the husband's family and society that sees "marriage as an Oware, where someone is bound to lose and another gains" (33). In Aidoo's words, she refers to what the Ghanaian community sees as the evil of civilisation, colonisation and the mockery of mechanization to replace human efforts especially woman's domesticity in their societies. This reveals the treatment of women as targets and the way in which tradition responds to the women-victims. This victimisation redefines their individual identities and life experiences.

Also, such a childless condition is also noticed in *Anowa*, whereby the society disregards any childless woman even if the husband is the cause. Eulalie's decision to have children is influenced when she discovers her vulnerability and the importance of children to the African people, but Ato misinterprets her genuine desire to start a family as mere weakness. The biased undertone in the description of women and motherhood reinforces the cultural view of women as victims whose identity hinges on their ability to be reproductive.

Similarly, in *MQS*, Lochhead explores the issue of motherhood and childbearing in the characters of Mary and Elizabeth as a significant one. In *Womanist Theology: Black Women's Voices* (2006) Delores S Williams identifies vitally important aspects of womanism as mothering and nurturing nature. She views these two aspects as

being interwoven to emancipation and liberation of woman's individual identity from traditional social roles. Mary's motherhood is presented to audiences as part of a social obligation which is discussed before its fulfilment and ignored as soon as she has a son to secure the throne. Mark Fisher observes in *The Guardian* (2011) that what sets Liz Lochhead's 1987 play apart is the way she presents the past and the present to rub up against each other, setting a off sparks of recognition as textbook history clashes with modern-day topicality.

Historically, the two queens whom Lochhead portrays in *MQS* never met, but have the same interests in motherhood and nurturing, the cousins keep close tabs on one another while they compete for the courtship of the same French, Spanish, and Austrian princes. As each represents the other's closest surviving relative, either woman could produce the heir to the other's throne. Elizabeth wishes for a Protestant heir, while Mary is Catholic and possesses religious tolerance, evidenced in her frequent dialogues with the founder of the Scottish Presbyterian Church, John Knox. The narrator, La Corbie, hints at this uneasy political relationship between the two queens:

LA CORBIE: The Island of Britain ain't big enough for the two of them.

The rivalry between these two Queens creates the inferiority and critical double standard faced by women who are in position of authority. Elizabeth is presented with a stable mind set in emotional, cultural and historical sense through her linguistic approval; Mary on the other hand is depicted in the opposite way as a French woman who speaks Scots, not English, which becomes influenced as the play continues. Lochhead depicts Mary as culturally displaced, a victim of identity crisis

due to her lack of rootedness in relation to her position as queen of Scots in British politics; she is conventionally and culturally represented within the patriarchal society. Lochhead explores the notion of feminine power through Mary; she constructs Mary as someone who exploits the sexuality and emotional vulnerability associated with her sex in order to get what she wants in her own way. Lochhead's dramatisation of Mary reveals Simone de Beauvoir's idea in *The Second Sex* (1952) that woman's subordinate role is based on her reproductive attributes and behaviours which she regards as women's enslavement. Mary thus shows the characteristics of a womanly woman, a woman who sees marriage as a fulfilment of her female royal role, and a woman who wants to choose her own husband not because of political needs, but because of her personal desire. Ironically she never actually chooses her husband; he is cleverly thrown upon her by Elizabeth and her advisers which also show Elizabeth's supremacy between the two queens. Mary however, does not realise that there should be a clear distinction between her political role as a queen and her cultural role as a woman. La Corbie calls the attention of the readers:

LA CORBIE: (Rhyming) Ony queens has o' ladies and maids

That she just snaps her fingers tae summon

And yet.... I ask you, when's a queen a queen

And when's a queen just a wummin? (16)

Mary's need to express feminine emotions is used against her when she displays her friendliness, motherliness, childishness, and enthusiasm towards Darnley and other men in the play. Elizabeth's firm language is what Walker's womanist view celebrates and encourages in women as defined in her book *In Search of Our Mother's Garden* (1983), Mary's character is an example of what womanist consciousness and commitment to the survival of the entire people, male and female

calls for (xi). While Elizabeth tries to eradicate all forms of her femaleness and femininity, Mary acts in accordance with Shirley Williams' assumption in *Some Implications of Womanist Theory* (1990) that women can talk both effectively and productively with men and about men.

When relating to Darnley, Mary does not express herself as the queen, but as a youthful lover displaying her emotions, and need to have someone to love. On the other hand in scene seven of the play, Darnley on his sick bed, is portrayed as an inexperienced and immature man with a lack of easy talk when addressing women. He talks about his mother's junkets and milk jellies in order to gain his strength, but still stylishly tells Mary to stay with him.

The way in which Lochhead develops the relationships between Mary and John Knox and Arnolphe and Agnes shows her concern with the way women and men relate to each other in general. The male characters in these two plays see women as dangerous, sexually potent and subversive entities, unfit for spiritual and political leadership as it is particularly shown in the case of Mary. McCulloch (2000) asserts that:

Liz Lochhead, a female writer in a still largely authoritarian and male dominated contemporary Scotland, presents Knox's overthrow of virgin Mary and has contribution to the troubles which beset Queen Mary as acts which initiated a suppression of the female principle in Scotland, something which in her view has affected adversely both women and men (26-27).

In John Knox's view, the very idea of women in authority or taking charge of their own selves is a difficult concept to comprehend especially in the light of traditional social, cultural and historical forces. Lochhead presents Knox as an oppressor who opposes international Catholicism which Mary represents. This mirrors Weatherall's

(2002) observation that dominance approach regards woman's language as a consequence of their relatively powerless position as compared to that of the men whose language reflects their connection with their concern for status and superiority.

In *Educating Agnes*, Lochhead uses Agnes's confession of love to show the extent to which the female's language and innocence can be used against her. It is when she finally opens up to the fact that she is neither innocent nor ignorant as she has presented herself originally that Arnolphe's attitude towards her completely changes. While audiences at Royal Lyceum, Edinburgh, 2011, see Agnes's confessions of love for young Horace in the presence of her benefactor as displays of sincerity, they also begin to distinguish between the genuine love between the two young lovers and love as commodity as represented by Arnolphe. Arnolphe's machinations in the play are part of a deceptive game with each potential lovers innocently reveal their secret plans to him, and allow him to systematically and intentionally attempt to thwart them. Arnolphe pretends to be a good friend to young Horace who reveals all his plans to him, he promises to keep Agnes safe for him and away from the good for nothing old guardian. With Arnolphe's believe that he understands women so well even when his friend Chrysalde is trying to dissuade him from marrying young Agnes, his superiority complex almost ruins him. During their dialogue, he talks with all assurance to Chrysalde about women, especially Agnes who is unaware about his benefactor's marriage plan to her. Arnolphe describes women derogatorily, qualifies women with contempt and abusive words like 'pits' and 'living ends' and sees men at the mercy of the cheating women (13). This description summarises his own fears and reservations about sexually active women like Chrysalde's wife, and his main

reason for choosing little Agnes who he feels can rarely differentiate between her left and right:

ARNOLPHE.

By cheating, she's so young and innocent.

CHRYSLALDE.

You kid yourself that some kid-

ARNOLPHE.

Don't kid yourself about anything, here's why:

Wives like your one, those with all the smarts,

The ball breakers, they're the ones to break our hearts.

So no bluestocking bride for me- there's a very fine line

Between brainy and barmy, so a burd that's no Einstein,

That's the best and only hope for a happy alliance

Yes, pick a simple girl – it's not rocket science!

No, she needn't be good at just one thing, but it

S' enough if she can love me and Jesus!- and can sew

And knit

...

I'm going to marry a sweet, pure, simple girl

Because your intellectual types, they make my toes curl (13-14).

Arnolphe's lines express his expectations of a married woman who is not expected to act freely anymore because of the cultural expectations that comes along with marriage and the social belief that a married woman need not think about anything other than her husband. One possible interpretation is that Arnolphe is emasculated by his very position and age in society. It is easier to control one's own actions when married to a sweet, pure and simple girl who does not know how to love, as clever

women who know how to arouse him, but he cannot control their lives. That is, he finds them sexually exciting which means that these women are in control of his passion, rather than him being in control of them. His belief that young females cannot reason outside their cultural expectations and their responsibilities to their husbands, children and marriage is evidenced in his reference to Chrysalde's wife. He sees her as intelligent, free and sexual desirable which are dangerous attributes that cannot be controlled by a middle-aged man. In contrast to Chrysalde's foul mouthed wife, Lochhead creates the character of Agnes who is able to deconstruct man's domination and societal view of marriage as she becomes the mouthpiece of another model of femininity.

At first, Lochhead explores formal and ideological limitations through Agnes to show a behavioural expectation which corresponds with D. Holland and M. Eisenhart in *Educated in Romance: Women, Achievement, & Campus* (1990) that young women learn to judge themselves in terms of their conformity to culture and to differentiate between their romantic and friendship relationships. The young women's failure to do this is always considered a rebellious act. Holland and Eisenhart's view later changes as Agnes engages in a rebellious act which starts with her 'self' knowledge and education that becomes an important tool for her socialisation, articulation and assertion.

This is also an issue in Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost* whereby Eulalie is expected to behave in some certain ways that will depict her as a cultural representation of married woman. Walker (1983) identifies that black writers seem to always engage in a moral and/or physical struggle, the result of which is expected to be freedom or emancipation. This may be because most of these black writers acknowledge the

effect of slavery and colonialism where the body and freedom are interwoven, but she does recognise how both genders are treated within history to create the distinct consciousness of the society.

Accordingly, scene four of *MQS* continues to interrogate the issue of gender in the context of the women being seen as socially marginal and religiously subversive. Historically, John Knox is a nod to commonly accepted moral stance in Renaissance society. However, Lochhead's stage directions reveal him as prejudiced against and afraid of women, a religious bigot under the mask of social acceptability. In Knox's own words:

Knox: I, John Knox, do preach the evangel of Jesus Christ crucified, by repentance and faith. And justification by faith alone. Moved by my God and in obedience to him wha is adune us a', I hae been commandit to blaw the first blast o' the trumpet against the monstrous regiment o' women, an abomination against nature and before God: and to disclose unto this my realm the vanity and iniquity of the papistical religion in all its manifestations in Sodom and poxetten nunneries.

Mary: John Knox, mair nor three years, I hae borne wi' you in a' your rigorous manners o' speakin' oot, bait against masel' and ma French uncles. And yit I hae your favour by a' possible means (19-20).

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the very idea of a woman in authority is a difficult concept to comprehend, especially in the light of the traditional social, cultural, historical and religious forces for John Knox. This is a similar situation that Walker questions in the dogmatic belief of the blacks believe in Christianity whereby

they hardly think there could be a God that is non-white as they have been force fed to see Christianity as being true and noble by their white masters. The dialogue that ensues between Mary and John Knox shows that he has always been against the possibility for Scotland to be ruled by a woman. Mary's womanly quietness is broken at this stage, she voices out her awareness of Knox's action against her mother, the Queen Regent, and against herself.

At the end of their discussion, Knox overwhelms Mary with his prejudiced brutal language as he sees the idolatry in the Catholic mass, but Lochhead's characterisation of Knox exposes his ugly sexist language in relation to women and Catholicism when responding to Mary's weeping. While Knox stares at Mary with pity or perhaps with lust as she cries, Lochhead exposes his fear of female sexuality which McCulloch (2000) identifies as Knox's fear of his own sexuality. Interestingly in Royal Lyceum's 2011 production none of this has been picked up from the text, and Liam Brennan's John Knox is an upright if self-righteous and cold-blooded missionary blinded by nationalism and touched by Mary's plight in a curiously asexual way.

Furthermore, Lochhead explores this by seeking to examine the roots of misogyny in the Church of Scotland. McCulloch (2000) observes that:

Lochhead has suggested that the suppression of the female principle in Scottish society since the Reformation has resulted not only in the marginalisation of women in the society but has resulted also in men suppressing the anima, the female part of themselves, so that caring human qualities are regarded as effeminate and therefore the qualities are suppressed. In this scene we also have the suggestion of 'genuine' pity becoming confused with 'lust' as a consequence of an unhealthy, inadequate response to women and sexuality, an inability to regard women in any way except sexual objects (29).

Knox's view of women's inferiority, and double standard when in a position of authority, exposes the implication of his utterances which although characterise women as emotional beings, at the same time disproves his belief of men as intellectual, cerebral and logical in his own words. McCulloch's assertion also applies to the Earl of Bothwell who regards all women, both queen and commoners, as his sexual prey. While Mary tries to exert her sovereignty over him, Mary becomes one of his sexual preys unknowingly to her through his sexual innuendoes and by means of a symbolic lewd kiss, which is directed at her through her maidservant, Bessie.

Similar to the Earl of Bothwell's belief is Arnolphe's view in *Educating Agnes* to show women as the weaker vessels created by God, who should always take instructions from men before they can do anything meaningful with their lives. This also corresponds with John Knox's perspective of women.

ARNOLPHE:

... As God has deemed it. Who should it vex
To accept there's a stronger and a weaker sex?
Just as the obedient child obeys the father,
Just as the good servant obeys his master,
Just as the willing subject obeys the king,
The lesser bows down to the greater in everything
And the ideal wife knows it's right and good
To show her husband all respect and gratitude.
My protection and my trust, Agnes, must be earned
By your *obedience*- . . . (34).

Lochhead at this point shows the pride of a man who wants respect in the society through his wife's obedience. By using some of these biblical references in the play, Lochhead recognises some of the biblical assertions that view women as the weaker sex in the society; they should always respect their husbands and obey them even if they are not willing to do such. This echoes Walker's (1983) view that being born a girl or a boy endows an individual with a specific biological make up, and that the definition of what constitutes being female or male is determined by culture. This helps Arnolphe to intertwine Agnes' femininity with domesticity, female virtue and feminine ignorance. Such view is also expressed in the behaviour of John Knox who see Mary as a woman defined by domestic roles who should not be the 'king'.

However, this is different from Aidoo's depiction of the Ghanian societal view that a woman with outstanding qualities of the male gender should be a 'Priestess' because of her assertive and determined nature. Although this is seen as another form of female exploitation in the African society, some women see it as a rare privilege as depicted by Anowa's characterisation, socially, economically, and linguistically which explores the belief of priestesshood that she refuses to be. Anowa leaves her town Yebi angrily and promises never to return. At first Anowa's husband, Kofi Ako accepts the wife's help by becoming a trader of hides, but wishes she is like other woman whom he sees around. Ironically, the other characters are unaware that Anowa depends on Kofi Ako emotionally, sexually and psychologically while Kofi also is dependent on the material, economic and psychological stability that he gets from trading with the white men.

Kofi Ako's comments and subsequent lines portrays what Walker sees as women's dedication in Anowa's action to bring out the manly potential in her husband and

disabuse the societal perception of the man she marries as no good. Kofi Ako asserts about his wife's strength, dedication and love that:

KOFI AKO: . . . Sometimes, I do not understand. Wherever we go, people take you for my sister at first. They say they have never heard of a woman who helped her husband so. 'your wife is good' they say 'for your sisters are the only women you can force to toil like this for you . . . (27).

The concept of capability in Aidoo's *Anowa* correlates to what Clenora Hudson-Weems describes in *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves* (1993) as a woman's long tradition of psychological as well as physical strength which comes from witnessing and understanding her male counterpart's powerlessness and his inability to fulfil the traditional role of man as protector, resulting in his emasculation; this allows a woman to protect such vulnerability (66). *Anowa's* way of thinking, acting and talking makes her very different to all other characters in the play. This allows her to create a new identity and representation which helps her to become a social subject in the society. Aidoo's presentation of other characters who believe that she should be a priestess because of her rebellious nature to socio-cultural norms of the society show why women are always reserved when it comes to creating a new identity for themselves. Osam, *Anowa's* father expresses his own personal fear of his daughter who acts rebelliously to every cultural obligation expected of a woman during his discussion with Badua. He views the societal perception of *Anowa* as no good to any member of the society she leaves behind because of her self-determination and assertion in marrying a man of her own choice and her leaving the society that does not see anything positive about assertive women. Osam's assertion about the feminine societal view of her daughter shows he

is not that bothered about what they say but allows his own fear to take control of him:

OSAM: Of course, women have mouth to talk with. And indeed they open them anyhow and much of the time what comes out is nothing any real man can take seriously . . . (32).

Osam seems defensive of his socio-cultural status who is rarely bothered by women talk. Anowa's parents' attitudes correspond with Mary Crawford's assertion in *Talking Difference: On Gender and Language* (1995) that women respond to stress by becoming overwhelmed and emotionally involved, men by becoming focused and withdrawn (83). To Osam, Anowa's action of being strong-willed and assertive shows her as an abnormal female who trespasses the societal expectations of womanhood which demand that she should be dedicated to priestesshood. This is also revealed in the Old Man and the Old Woman's dialogues about Anowa's mother, Badua, who they feel denies her daughter the destiny she deserves in priestesshood.

Aidoo characterises Anowa in a credible manner that challenges the tradition. In Ghanaian society, a girl is married off to the husband of parents' choice immediately after she has reached puberty, unless she has proven to be strong-willed – masculine – in which case she would become a priestess. Anowa's rejection of priestesshood is twofold; it comes from her unwillingness to limit herself and from her mother's view, as a member of an older generation, that priestesshood denies women their femininity and rightful position in society. Badua asserts this in her expectation of Anowa's domestic functions when she gets married that:

BADUA: I want my child

To be a human woman
Marry a man,
And be happy to see her
Peppers and onions grow.
A woman like her
Should bear children
So she can afford to have
One or two die.
Should she not take
Her place at meetings
Among the men and women of the clan?
And sit on my chair when
I am gone? And a captainship in the army,
Should not be beyond her
When the time is ripe! (12-13).

Although Badua's concern for her daughter could be viewed as selfish from one end as she wants the society to see her as a good mother who has accomplished her motherhood responsibility towards her daughter, her actions also reveals her sincere love of mothering and nurturing filled with self-pity and sympathy. None of the other characters involved in Anowa's life realise her quest for change, not even Kofi Ako who is portrayed as being an understanding and loving husband. While he accepts her helping hand at the beginning, he changes after his acquisition of wealth and later sees Anowa's womanish nature as a form of witchcraft.

Lochhead and Aidoo's female characters progressively develop a sense of maturity within their male dominant societies outside their domestic spheres. This is evidenced in *Educating Agnes* whereby Arnolphe is depicted as being romantic but

in reality he is a misogynist which Michael Flood describes in *Men and Masculinity* (2003) as an attitude common in men but also exists in women towards other women. This is an ideology that accompanies a patriarchal system where societies continue to place women in a subordinate position with limited access to power and decision making. Although Arnolphe helps Agnes to grow out of some socio-cultural expectations of the female gender through education, he becomes a misogynist when Agnes refuses to fall into the category of the acceptable socio-cultural women. Arnolphe fails to realise that there should be some degree of sexual, intellectual, cultural and marital freedom for women before or even after marriage, all he is interested in is his own selfish need for Agnes to satisfy him, obey him and remain ignorant for life. He makes Agnes see marriage as a sacred union in which women are in bondage:

AGNES.

Yes. But here's the thing. Unfortunate, but true.

As a husband; I prefer him to you.

You described marriage to me at length.

It sounded horrible. 'God give me strength!'

Said I to myself, 'I'm not going there!'

Horace made it sound very different, I do declare (72).

Agnes' revelation about Arnolphe's view of marriage reveals her inner strength to confront the issue of marriage that her guardian describes as a master-servant relationship. Lochhead's portrayal of the new Agnes is to change the thoughts of men like Arnolphe in the existing patriarchal culture where women are referred to as acquired decorative property. Although Agnes is seen as muted and ignorant in the beginning of the play, at this stage she gains her audibility by falling in love with a

man who sees a possibility of retaining freedom in marriage. David Pollock in *The List* sees Liz Lochhead's translation of *Educating Agnes* as a production that explores universal themes where young love triumphs over the corrupt over-aged one.

Walker's womanish view is explored in the character of Agnes as she engages in a meaningful dialogue with Arnolphe, her master and benefactor, not only through her sexual power but through her words, to question the institution of marriage and affairs between both genders. She is able to challenge the traditional male domination of the public sphere through the development of her autonomous self and imagination. This reveals the sexual power of the feminine gender which also makes John Knox in *MQS* becomes fearful. Ironically in *Educating Agnes*, Arnolphe becomes the guardian of the intended bride he refers to as a 'dog' (80) whom Horace's father wants his son to marry. Chrysalde's comment that Arnolphe 'stinks of self interest' (80) shows his disgust to men in the society who still treat women with contempt and see them as owned property in the society. Georgette reveals her hatred towards Arnolphe, who wants to force Agnes to marry him because he is her beneficiary, obeys instructions because he is the master and wants to follow the norms of the patriarchal society.

GEORGETTE.

Want to marry wee Agnes? How could he have thought her likely to make him happy.

Chrysalde's opinion about women, with the help of his intellectual wife, shows that women are no longer the silent, passive, decorative and owned property of men in the society in his address to Arnolphe which mirrors Walker's womanist view that

women and men are social beings and their working together can bring about a structural reformation needed for the female gender to become socio-culturally emancipated:

CHRYSLALDE.

Women are human beings, not chattels to be possessed.

Body and mind, thoughts, dreams, desires, heart and soul.

Some things are-properly-beyond our control (63).

Chrysalde acknowledges that women have become autonomous as there is a trend of change that has evolved in the new generation of women who have become the subject of their own story instead of the depressed and unfulfilled stereotypes that Arnolphe feels still exist. Also, Aidoo explores the growing autonomy of Anowa and Eulalie where both characters see the need for some changes in their society. Despite the credibility Aidoo gives to Anowa in her choice of words, Anowa can be seen as one of the females in the patriarchal society suffering from feminine madness that is, the deviance from culturally identified feminine roles. Anowa rejects the culture that makes her vulnerable at the beginning of the play, hoping to find solace in her choice of husband and her choice of new environment. Unfortunately, she becomes more vulnerable within the new society she feels will give her comfort and security and the husband she marries.

Eulalie on the other hand also suffers from the same problem of non-integration; Eulalie's inability to adapt to the African culture makes her become the victim of a society and culture that is neither willing nor ready to accept because of her negligence to the domestic feminine role. She refuses to eat their food, act like a cultural married woman who is confined and reserved, and refuses to adopt their

ways of life. Eulalie sees most of the African culture as barbaric and outdated. Odamtten (1994) sees Eulalie's character as a "tourist brochure" (9) image of Africa, she is the one who keeps questioning the actions of Ato, his family, and herself. In short, she is, throughout most of the play, very much aware of herself as *sujet-en-soi* -- a person caught between two conflicting ideological practices. This awareness forces upon her the beginnings of a crucial consciousness; however, she never becomes a "subject" or "individual –as-subject" in the sense that I have defined it (34).

Although Aidoo's portrayal of Eulalie is that of the courage and understanding that she must speak against the culture that hinders women's freedom of action, she still feels lonely. This is because she is the only female in the play fighting for women's freedom in the culture that has limited their capability. She detests pretence and so acts without any form of reservation in her husband's society that views women as properties owned by men, who should act according to their husbands' cultural beliefs. Esi Kom's lines confirm Eulalie's attitude towards Ato's culture when she throws away what her mother-in-law brought for her. As much as Eulalie wishes to be part of Ato's life, she is merely ready for the substitution of the cultural influence and its effects which disallows her from becoming the subject of her own story. The silent Esi Kom becomes infuriated by Eulalie's actions towards her hospitality while she laments and pours out all her harboured grievances. This makes Esi Kom feel humiliated by her son and his wife:

ESI: No, my son, I shall speak. You have been back for a long time yet. The vulture, right from the beginning wallows in the soup he will eat. Have your Hureri got all her machines now? Hureri must have a sut of. Hureri

must have something in which to put her water to cool. Hureri, Hureri,
Hureri. Oh, the name keeps buzzing in my head like the sting of a
Witch- bee! (31).

Esi Kom at this stage sees her son from two perspectives. In *Border Crossing* production in 2007, directed by Michael Wallings, Esi Kom played by Dzifa Glikpoe performed her role brilliantly as a cheeky and overbearing African mother. On the one hand, she sees him as a cultural traitor who is unable to defend his culture, people and history due to western influence and on the other hand, sees him as a shadow of himself. Ironically as Esi Kom engages in her son's evaluation of lost identity, she also highlights the socio-cultural expectation of the male gender as viewed from the psychoanalytic perspective. Although Esi Kom's situation corresponds to Mary's marginalised situation in *MQS* in some ways, these female characters struggle for self definition in a society that has inflexible expectations of women and at the end face the consequence of their actions.

Similar to these inflexible expectations is the repercussion Anowa suffers, which her mother predicts from the beginning. It is believed she is childless as a result of her rebellious act and her non-conformity to become a priestess and the implication of choosing her own husband. Aidoo's description of Anowa and Eulalie as being "stiffly, wild and strange" (8) shows their non-conformity to cultural situations limiting women's capability to make a different society free of patriarchy and gender discrimination. Anowa's desire to marry Kofi Ako and Eulalie's refusal to adapt to her husband's culture is an unexpected twist in their lives. Much of the plots of the plays concern the power of custom and tradition on female gender facing the consequences of not obeying tradition. These two characters' characterisations echo

Robin Lakoff's idea from *Language and Woman's Place* in *The Feminist Critique of Language* (2005) that:

IF A LITTLE GIRL 'TALKS ROUGH' like a boy, she will normally be ostracised, scolded, or made fun of. In this way society, in the form of a child's parents and friends keep her in line, in her place (242).

This act is always perpetuated mostly by the mothers who serve as the upholders of tradition. Learning to talk outside a socio-cultural norm is not always permitted especially for the female gender who will be corrected immediately. Learning to speak like a boy is a way of breaking the female traditional role as constructed by men and fighting the limitations established by an overtly masculine society. In line with Anowa, these masculine actions make her become the victim in the cultural society that does not allow such female autonomy. Even Anowa regards herself to be a wayfarer who has no aboard due to the fact that the treatment she is given is not what she deserves, both from the husband and the society in general. The husband feels she is lonely because she has no children while the society expects her to remain in the domestic cocoon because she is a woman. The dialogue that transpires between Kofi Ako and Anowa shows the patriarchal expectation of a woman to have children. They assert that:

ANOWA: . . . My nothing is on. It's just that when I throw my eyes into the future, I do not see myself there...

KOFI AKO: This is because you have no children. Women who have children can always see themselves in the future

ANOWA: Mm. . . children. It would be good to have them. But it seems I'm not woman enough. And this is another reason why you ought to marry another woman. So she can bear your children. (pause) Mm, I am only a wayfarer, with no belongings

either here or there. (36-37).

Aidoo describes Anowa as a wayfarer, with no belongings shown in her objection to acquiring slaves and belongings. In relation to female discourse, this is because Anowa has no child that could secure her a place in her old and new society. Ironically, both Anowa and Kofi Ako becomes the wayfarer at the end of the play whereby each of them loses their identity and none is seen as the subject of the story but rather victims of patriarchal expectations. By trading with the white men, Aidoo reveals her view of a wayfarer in relation to the conservative standards of the traditional social order. However, Aidoo sees a woman's journey like that of a traveller who belongs to no particular place, she is married out of her father's house, and if she is unfortunate enough to have children in her husband's house as well, she is unable to settle down and so she ends up being a woman without a destination.

Anowa's view of herself shows she sees other women in her position as slaves being owned in the society to celebrate men's accumulation of wealth, who are denied freedom of action and their use of voice. Though Anowa rejects the principles of slave labour, her husband enjoys acquiring slaves and takes pride in it as well because of the stability it gives to both as analysed earlier. Aidoo weaves together the issues of slave trade, women situation and displaced identity in the play, which allows the couple's adopted-slave twins, Panyin-na-kakra, to hardly remember their origin. Anowa's rejection of slave trade practice shows her rejection of women's subordination in the contemporary patriarchal societies and the evil of the slave trade.

On the other hand, Eulalie assumes the male position in her marriage to Ato. This shows Ato's love for his wife, but also depicts that his sense of identity has been

altered through the influence of the western culture, and although he tries to embrace his original culture upon his return to Africa by presenting a masculine mentality before his family, he is unable to sustain it. Aidoo portrays Ato as a man with cultural instability who wants to please his wife and at the same time wants to please his people by obeying the socio-cultural norms. Ato's failure lies in his inability to confront 'self' and tradition in relation to history and socio-cultural expectation. This makes him fall in between two traditions that disallow him from being the loving husband and obedient man to his patriarchal culture. Eulalie sees her husband as a cultural coward who does not really understand the culture, but dogmatically believes in what his people want from him to save his manly ego. Eulalie's expression shows her disgust about her husband's pretence to accept the culture of his people despite knowing what he wants:

EULALIE: . . . [In pathetic imitation of Ato] 'Eulalie, my people say it is not good for a woman to take alcohol, Eulalie, my people say they are not pleased to see you smoke, . . . Eulalie, my people say . . . my people . . . my people . . .' Damned rotten coward of a Moses. [Ato winces] spite of what your people say . . . who married me, you or your goddam people? . . . And of course, you should have known that. Have they appreciation for anything but their own prehistoric existence? More savage than dinosaurs. With their snails and their portions you afterwards told me, didn't you, that they wanted me to strip before them and have my belly washed? Washed that filth! [she laughs mirthlessly] What did you tell them I was before you picked me, strip-tease? . . . Go and weep at the funeral of a guy you never knew. These are the things they know and think are worth while (44-45).

Metaphorically, Ato becomes the ghost in the play as his actions in the latter part of the play contradict the earlier ones. As Ato tries to interweave both cultures through his wife and his family members, he deroots himself from internal and external connections. While he is not ready to do away with his cultural heritage nor his wife, his self-expression becomes threatened. While he becomes confused like the ghost who is unable to decide the way to go in his dream as a little boy, he reiterates this by his cultural nationalistic arrogance and his chauvinism in his language and action which reaffirms the dilemma Aidoo portrays in her title.

Lochhead dramatises some of Ato's behaviour of cultural nationalistic pride in Queen Elizabeth, whose character is firm as analysed earlier. Different from other female characters in these plays, Elizabeth in *MQS* maintains her rigid physical firmness and political consciousness in her role as a queen in the patriarchal society by suppressing her feminine nature; Lochhead depicts it as having consequences of fear and psychological distress. Elizabeth's words show that she esteems her queenly role and does not want any emotional interference with it in order not to be regarded as weak like her cousin:

ELIZABETH: ... No more. What shall it profit a woman if she can rule a
whole kingdom but cannot quell her own rebellious heart.
...I am not proud I love him- but I am proud that loving, still
I will not let him master me (25).

As Lochhead's portrayal of Elizabeth and Mary differs, she presents Mary as a woman who is emotionally flexible, motivated by what she emotionally and personally holds dear, but could take encouragement from others. During her argument with Knox in act one, scene four, La Corbie who has been acting outside

the play either as chorus or ringmaster, gets involved in inciting Mary. However, Mary becomes a victim in the sense that Lochhead presents a play that is not only a revision of the historical persona but also a revision of a myth of a woman derooted from her society that popular culture has built around her. Lochhead chooses to offer a sympathetic portrait of Mary at the end of the play by reinforcing her legendary status as the victim of Elizabeth, of John Knox, and of her husband and his band of unruly noblemen. Mary's tragic end at the hands of the aristocracy and with complicated issues from her cousin Elizabeth is portrayed as representative of the ways in which women have been excluded from and corrupted by masculine institutions of power.

Although Aidoo presents Anowa as a self determined and self assertive female who is firm and courageous at the beginning of the play, she loses out to become the victim to some extent at the end because of not obeying the culture and not performing the societal feminine role. Anowa's recollection of her inquisitiveness with her grandmother's tales depicts the womanist-womanish ideology of wanting to know more than other women do. At the end, she refuses to behave like the adult she used to be because she discovers she has gained nothing from it except a wretched life of sorrow, depression, humiliation and marginality. Anowa's call to the wall picture of Queen Victoria depicts her sense of connectedness to the treatment of women universally. At that point, she recognises herself and other women around as victims of a patriarchal system both in and outside of Africa. She feels cheated as she knows her cause of childlessness is due to her husband's infertility which is at revealed at the end in his refusal to marry another wife, but the society blames her for it. Aidoo portrays this concealment of Kofi Ako's impotence as the secret which he

does not want the society to know about or to question his manliness if he is unable to impregnate the second wife and so takes offence when Anowa suggests the offer of second wife to him. Anowa's awareness of his problem reiterates Boy and Girl's earlier discussion about the society's knowledge of his impotence and his accumulation of wealth through the slave trade.

Anowa's death is regarded as a result of her rebellious nature and non conforming attitude which the mother foresees at the beginning when she is being adamant as a young girl, but Old Man and Old Woman see it as the outcome of her denial to become a priestess, which leads to all other twist in her life since such behaviour is not cherished from a woman, thus she is referred to as being alien to womanhood.

In *Educating Agnes*, Lochhead depicts Agnes with an assertive feminine power which helps her despite Arnolphe's restraint and commands not to see any other man, so she will not fall in love with them or fall into the wrong hands except him. This portrays him as over protective, jealous and not understanding of women's nature. This idea of his restraints is considered with hatred by his two servants who believe he is just a loser who refuses to admit his failure.

ALAIN.

Why keep Agnes out from the world and under lock and key

And be that over-strict wi'her, it seems to me,

As to keep her away from all other fellas?

GEORGETTE.

Hello! Could it be because he's jealous?

Soup well! Same question! Understand?

Woman is ... man's plate of home- made soup

And when one man sees another try and ... dip
His dirty spoon- worse, dirty fingers- in his bowl
He tends to be no very pleased at all (33).

Although Alain is a stock character embodied in Moliere's original comic play, Lochhead also portrays him as a bit stupid but behind his stupidity, is a depiction of harsh reality. Alain's reply shows the pride of a patriarchal man equals love and jealousy. This dialogue goes further with Georgette's metaphoric observation of how a woman is viewed by such a man as a bowl of soup which he can dip his dirty fingers in at any time in the patriarchal society. This explanation depicts how a woman is treated with uncaring nature by a man who feels money and perishable material things are everything that a woman needs in marriage. In the mind of such a patriarchal man, a woman is not expected to express her feelings towards a man she loves and so she should remain in silence since marriage makes her a fulfilled woman. Lochhead depicts this in the character of Arnolphe through his conversation with Agnes which shows that he views marriage as a woman's fulfilment.

ARNOLPHE.

Yes! Matrimony makes one quite the happy chappie! (42)

He does think that Agnes has no intellect of her own, that she cannot think for herself because she is a young girl with an innocent mind. Agnes disproves this by telling him she is in love with Horace and not any other man he introduces will change her mind. At the age of eighteen, Arnolphe still treats Agnes like someone who is immature, insecure, and unable to think for herself.

ARNOLPHE.

...

Your innocence and virtue, Agnes, were in danger.

Never again take sweets, or anything else, from stranger.

Young men are vile, dear Agnes- believe me, I know-

And you were on the part of peril with that so-and- so.

But, nuff said, no real harm done, h's gone-

Thanks to the force with which you chucked that stone!

I know, 'cause I was watching, pet, great stuff!

Still, I think it is time we got you married off!

Stay, we need to talk! . . . (45)

The book on marriage and self-happiness Arnolphe has given Agnes is summarised by him here, disallowing the girl from having the knowledge of what the book contains on her own. This self-help book becomes a book of dual-help. Arnolphe is characterised as an ever-present influence on Agnes' decisions from the beginning of the play until she breaks away by falling in love with Horace who is seen as a form of her emancipation. Arnolphe creates his own understanding of the book about the cultural expectations of women in marriage, of how to get and remain faithful with a rich husband which he assume he is, and the idea of the ideal wife.

The book, according to him, is full of sound advice for Agnes which will help her to distinguish between wrongs and rights when she is married. Arnolphe describes women in a derogatory manner of having 'emotional incontinence'. This is portrayed as his view about women and at the end of the play, he loses out because he is not ready to see women in a new positive way which will give women their emotional, physical and intellectual autonomy, but he is culturally tied down to seeing women with an inferiority complex.

Agnes's character is mirrored in E.A Clarke and T. Lawson's observation about Mary Deem's assertion in *Gender: An Introduction* (1985) that education of

working-class girls in the nineteenth century was blatantly geared towards improving their domestic skills, while the education of some of the daughters of the bourgeoisie was more similar to that offered to boys, though usually inferior in quality (15). This is displayed throughout the play in Arnolphe's view of Agnes and her education. Arnolphe believes sending Agnes to school is about teaching her how to be a perfect woman as a wife, mother and obedient servant, but the letter Agnes writes to Horace to apologise for his ill-treatment reveals her as an active student that has learnt to communicate in the public spheres. Agnes' confession of love despite being forced to maltreat Horace shows women are capable of expressing their minds and fighting for what they want rather than being forced to do what they would not have wanted to do. The letter infuriates Arnolphe because he feels he is winning the love game between him and Horace, but he fails. This letter explores a woman finding a voice to express her emotional feelings towards the person she loves. As Agnes says in the letter:

Dear One,

*I don't know how to start. I've just began to realise I've been
kept in ignorance, so if I write down something wrong, forgive
me. See, I don't know what you've done to me but,
since I met you, I know I'll never ever be the same again. I
can't bear the way I am forced to treat you.'*

...

*'I love you. Am I wrong to write this? Am I too forward?
am I foolish to say that, when they tell me everything
every young man says is a lie, I don't believe them? Tell
me the truth, are you One Who Lies? For if you were to*

deceive me, I truly believe I should die. They say you only want one thing and I don't know what they mean, except you told me you want one thing and that's my heart. You have it' (53).

The content of this letter makes Arnolphe treat Agnes in a more hostile manner. He gets angrier because he realises that Agnes is aware of her ignorance over all these years. He sees Agnes' letter as a way of blackmailing him despite all his assumed love and care towards her and he regrets educating Agnes towards dismissing her feelings and regards towards him. Lochhead uses the play to reiterate the importance in female education and its societal benefits that seek to liberate women from old time traditions that limit their potential to the domestic sphere. Arnolphe mutters of Agnes' ingratitude furiously after Horace reads the letter to him, saying 'what was so great about making madam literate?' (53). This exposes some men's belief that it is a waste of money and resources to educate the female gender who will end up doing the domestic chores when married. He regrets ever allowing Agnes to have access to education instead of the nunnery way of life that could have made her silent throughout her lifetime.

Arnolphe's refusal to listen to his friend's opinion about this new type of woman whom Agnes has become through education and falling in love with a man who sees dignity in femininity and voice makes him a loser at the end. He feels that he can still control Agnes who is filled with expressive desires; ready for a cultural and social change that she has been denied.

In conclusion, Lochhead and Aidoo present female characters who are locked within the cultural context of being defined in relation to the domestic expectations and limitations which in essence articulate the idea of women as marginal. One may

argue that both writers are in active search of female wholeness and socio-cultural authenticity rather than victims dying in silence. Although female characters in these plays may at times fall victims of their own words, actions and thoughts, they gradually grow out of their victimisations to question the wholeness in themselves, in their relationships with others and in the society. This makes them search for a voice that has denied authority through their loneliness, analysed by Walker's (1983) womanist view as a 'radical vision of the society' (264) which is a way that celebrates femininity within the socio-cultural context. In many respects, this encourages the women writers to engage in a matriarchal critique of the patriarchal system. The search for women's voices and the difference between female audibility and silence as determined by economic, socio-cultural and linguistic power is analysed in the next chapter whereby Sue Glover and Julie Okoh question the exclusion of female voices from the public domain.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE IDEOLOGY OF SILENCE AND AUDIBILITY: AN EXPLORATION OF FEMALE CHARACTERISATION IN JULIE OKOH'S *THE MANNEQUINS* (1997) AND *EDEWEDE* (2000) AND SUE GLOVER'S *BONDAGERS* (1995) AND THE *SEAL WIFE* (2008).

JULIE OKOH

Julie was born in 1947 at Ubiaja Local Government of Edo State. She attended St. Benedicts Catholic Primary School, Ubiaja. Her secondary education was at Our Lady of Lourdes Girls School, Uromi, Edo State before she proceeded to Loyola University, Illinois where she had her degree qualifications respectively. Julie also studied French at Universite de Bordeaux III, France. From her childhood upbringing, she imbibed the traditional and cultural norms of her community which leads to her interest in the theatre world. Her works are mainly concerned with the situation of women in the African society as she sees writings by women in the patriarchal societies as commitments to address and publicise the plight of women. Her works include *The Mask* (1988), *Mannequins* (1997), *Edewede* (2000), *In the Fullness of Time* (2000) amongst others.

Synopsis of Julie Okoh's Plays

The Mannequins

This play shows how men's infidelity nature is condoled at part of their societal recognition. It further analyses the problems faced by women who turn down men's sexual advances in the patriarchal society where women are regarded as dolls to be seen and not heard. The play presents a wife, Mrs Adudu who is unable to question her husband's behaviour at the beginning of the play, but later voices out her pains before she leaves her matrimonial home. Okoh portrays a typical African society whereby women are treated as objects to be acquired to boost men's wealth and generosity. While a lady like Bharo agrees to this opinion, Eriaye's belief is different that makes her get the support of some of the male characters in the play. At the end, Mr. Adudu faces the consequences of his actions when all the women in the play rise against him.

Edewede

A play that presents three generations of women, the older (Ebikere), the middle age (Edewede), and the young (Oseme) generation with conflicting opinions of women's freedom. As Edewede fight for their freedom in a society that sees female circumcision as rite of passage, Okoh exposes the plights faced by women after the experience which the society is unaware of. Rather than seeing the practise as a measure to preserve the acclaimed chastity, the middle-age women are called into actions after the enlightenment about the dangers of female circumcision. With the determination of these middle-aged women, female circumcision is abolished at the end of the play.

SUE GLOVER

Sue was born in Edinburgh in 1943 and lives in the East of Neuk of Fife. She writes for radio, television, and theatre. Her theatre works include, *The Seal Wife* (1980), *The Bubble Boy* (1981), *The Straw Chair* (1988), *Sacred Hearts* (1994), *Bondagers* (1995), *Shetland Saga* (2000), *Bear on Chain* (2010). Glover uses the storytelling technique to intrude into the structure and language of her plays which helps to unveil the rhythm and imagery which also helps to see the effect of the patriarchal system on women.

Synopsis of Sue Glover's plays

Bondagers

A play that tells the story of six farm women working on the great Border farms of Scotland in the 1860s. The play opens at the hiring fair, an annual event that decides what farm the women will for in the coming year. These are set of women that live their lives on day to day basis and have to deal with themes of powerlessness and exploitation. While Liza longs for a life in Canada, the harvest celebration turns sour when Tottie, a fourteen year old 'daftie' is raped by a ploughman, Kello, who because of his looks and charm caught the hearts of many young bondagers. At the end, Tottie is blamed for Kello's death and none of the bondagers care to listen to Tottie's side of the story.

The Seal Wife

Glover sets the play on the furthest edges of a remote Scottish shore to present a modern version of the Scottish myth of the Selkies. The seal hunter, Alec and his mother live a secluded life on the beach, away from the small local fishing community represented in the play. When Alec accidentally wounds a mysterious young woman, Rona, during one of his hunt, he brings her home and begins an affair with her. This affair changes the lives of the characters. Rona's pregnancy brings out the true phallocentric nature in Alec which leads to the misunderstanding

between the two. Glover presents a relationship break-up due to view towards gender roles in the society. Rona at the end leaves her daughter, Isla, behind with her mother-in-law, Agnes, in pursuit of a new realisation outside motherhood and femininity.

Introduction

Karen Baker-Fletcher observes in *An Irresistible Power Not Ourselves* (1992) that womanism as a theory is concerned with the power of women's voices, while it challenges their silence and their exclusion of voices from public discourse. Spender (1989), Cameron (1998), Elgin (2000) have defined silence as the extent to which women's voices are heard or silenced by the sexism of a society as a whole. Apart from analysing the silence of the black race within the American society, Walker's womanist theory also recognises that women have been and are still slighted because they do not occupy the same linguistic status with men in public discourse. Using the metaphors of silence and audibility, this chapter explores women's ability to either speak out against or condone the unpleasantness of the unjust socio-cultural and historio-political issues associated with patriarchal society that does not allow them act on their own volition. Such situations either make or mar the women's future, as those who speak out against are seen as rebels and those who obey are defined by their limitations.

Walker's womanism explains that the denial of women's voice is the denial of personal freedom and meaningful interrelatedness with others since the avenue to communicate effectively has been destroyed. Although this is evidenced in the works to be analysed which concentrate on the three concepts at the heart of Walker's theory- audaciousness, woman- centeredness and community- centeredness, within the women's discourse they also show that women need some level of persuasion in order to attain an audible level in the male dominated societies. These three concepts are present in Julie Okoh's and Sue Glover's plays in the thematic analysis of silence and audibility which redress female identity, women's position in the society, gender

relationships, sexual autonomy and self-expression. These plays include Julie Okoh's *Edewede* (2000) and *The Mannequins* (1997) and Sue Glover's *The Seal Wife* (2008) and *Bondagers* (1995). Both writers occupy significant positions in their respective literary traditions; while Julie Okoh is classified as one of the second generations of West African female writers who are more radically inclined than those of the first generation, Sue Glover sits between two generations of Scottish female playwriting. Although they belong to different generations and geo-cultural locations, they write characters who subvert societal view of women's inferior intellectual capabilities through the use of language to effect changes in their various relations within society or with individuals. This is expressed through the themes of powerlessness and progress and the use characterisation to examine women's social existence in relation to the economic, political and sexual exploitation in a society which both Okoh and Glover examine in the relationships between the male and female characters. Horvat (1999) observes that:

Glover employs themes and language to investigate her character's perception of female identity, their position in society, interactions with other characters (both male and female), their sexuality and possibility of self expression through means other than motherhood (27).

Through language use, Glover's plays challenged the audiences/readers to scrutinise the assumptions about gender and power as well as the language in question through the use of voice. Her plays see the barrier of language as a powerful tool and significant indicator of femininity in the society which legalises female expectations or stereotypes. The idea that women are more conservative, naturally cautious and reserved is re-addressed in Glover and Okoh's writing. As Horvat (1999) observes about Glover's plays, and this also applies to Okoh, they do not only explore

motherhood in relation to personal identity, but also expose the situation of female to female oppressive perception in upholding patriarchal culture. Both writers see that not only patriarchy as an ideological or political system devoices women within the society, but also the older generation of women who view modern changes to femalehood as an alien culture that should not be encouraged or accepted. This older generation of women are viewed as traditionalists whose belief in the cultural norms makes them adamant, ignorant and unchanging as their gender has been an integral part of their socio-cultural life which Walker describes in her explanation of the elder women's in the community who try to caution the younger females from being audacious and wanting to know more than what is required of them. These women see themselves as upholders of the same culture that limits them to the private sphere, which encourages domestic violence, rape, genital mutilation amongst others, women who ignorantly sacrifice their 'selves' against their own will and at the same time expected to remain silent in the public domain. In line with such behaviours from two different categories of older and the younger generation of women, this creates a clear distinction for them to choose between their rites and rights in the society. While the use of rites in most cases are enforced and make women silent even though they might have something important to voice, rights give them an alternative to live a more fulfilling life as females in any patriarchal society.

The issue of breaking away from women's traditional role is analysed in Okoh's portrayal of Mrs Adudu in *The Mannequins*, who at the end of the play realises that her being a wife and a mother holds no value for the society and the husband she has adored despite his infidelity. Mr Adudu's character depicts the society's contempt for and disregard of femalehood through his preference to share all his secrets with a

male friend, Mr Igberaese, rather than with his wife. Okoh exposes this in the character of Mr Adudu's friend, who walks into their bedroom uninvited, starts a conversation with Mr Adudu and changes the topic when Mrs Adudu comes back into the room. Both friends switch over to the plight of Everytown people who are desperately in need of water instead of their discussion about the money Mr Adudu lavishes on a lady's birthday party simply to entice her. In Mrs Adudu's innocence, she demonstrates the caring nature of a woman, by showing her concern for these people, urging her husband to help out because she knows he is capable of doing it. The moment she leaves the room, Igberaese cautions his friend's unwise spending as a means of getting a woman's attention to himself since he is a man who believes in polygamy as an acceptable social way of life for an African man.

Okoh portrays Mr Igberaese as a man who tries in vain to stop his friend's infidelity. She presents him as a man with a womanist consciousness protecting Mrs Adudu's interest in her absence; and yet he advises his friend to marry a second wife if he is not satisfied with his legally married wife. He sees Mr Adudu as a man 'lost in the wind of change' (18) under the pretence of civilization. Like the character of Ato Lawson in the previous chapter who is torn between two diverse cultural heritages, Mr Adudu deroots himself by not marrying another wife in the name of civilisation; he has lots of mistresses to satisfy his sexual desire which corresponds with the social belief in polygamy and men's infidelity as an acceptable. In Mr Adudu's mind, he believes his friend is becoming a worthless man by not accepting and condoling his way of life:

MR ADUDU: Look! You are becoming a jigger in my toes. I can't even step on the ground again. Be reasonable my friend! Man is man, ancient or modern.

Ehenh! Who wants to retire from active service at my age? Man must learn to be active. After all variety is the spice of life (19).

The playwright's presentation of Mr Adudu does not show a man who is not interested in women's emotional, financial, or psychological emancipation; the play portrays the mental domestication perpetuated on the female gender who accepts man's infidelity as part of the cultural norms in a patriarchal society. This is expressed by Okoh's use of Mrs Adudu's marital plight to explore and publicise the effects of men's infidelity on women, home and the society at large as most seem to condone such acts. Okoh sees such marital maltreatment as what makes a woman suffer from psychological violence and trauma, like Glover's Agnes in *The Seal Wife*⁶ whom Rona describes as an enduring woman but Agnes sees that the situation makes her wiser and courageous:

AGNES: He grew a bitter shell round him – because of other people. They said he was an evil spirit; shunned him; called him Jonah. He grew a bitter shell; he grew harder to understand. . . . But he didn't change. . . I've changed – I'm greyer, emptier. I wanted the people I love to be happy . . . (57).

⁶Glover's *The Seal Wife* is a depiction of the modern version of the Scottish myth of the Selkies, the Seal people, who can change shape from seal to human. Such a myth is also found in other places like Ireland, Norway, Iceland and Africa which reveals how these non-humans come ashore and shed their skins to take on the human appearance to procreate with each other.

Still, Agnes' psychological trauma is not that of infidelity but abandonment. She sees how men change in relation to their social expectations and women are unable to help themselves which make them inaudible as these manly characteristics are socio-culturally accepted. Agnes' recollection of her husband David is that of a loving and dedicated man, but grows to build a line of defence around himself the same way his son, Alec does when he meets Rona. Although Agnes confirms her abandonment makes her wiser and devastated while she is unable to change anything, she experiences emotional destruction that is socially supported. The play exposes how the female protagonist, Rona whose representation is that of a dislocated identity, isolated and alienated in a man-dominated society that has certain socio-cultural expectations of the female gender, is not ready to accept the social representation of the male gender; she later respects Agnes' view about people's freedom irrespective of gender. Like the patriarchal acceptance in *The Seal Wife*, Mr Adudu sees his infidelity as part of traditional culture, accepted by men and tolerated by women in the society that regards such behaviour as a way of boosting the masculine ego since one way a man can be active is to be sexually active both in and outside his marital home. One of Okoh's descriptions of the female gender is summarised by Mrs Adudu's language that views women as doll babies which substantiates her husband's lines about men being sexually active as he is. The men's active mindset enables them to believe that women are merchandise which explains Mrs. Adudu's analysis of a young girl being cuddled, loved, and played with, but when she becomes old, she is abandoned, neglected and abused like the way the young girl abandons the doll babies when she is more mature. Such doll babies receive occasional cuddles which explains Mrs Adudu's plight in her matrimonial home.

Although these female characters present stereotypes of women in restricted cultural representations which underpin their oppression and how they are able to resist some of these, they also show their sexual subjectivities, linguistic aesthetics and cultural identities.

While these female characters are presented as sexually less important except for their reproductive capability, they are seen as examples of women who show realistic portraits of women in active search of a voice. For example in Glover's *Bondagers*, the only punishment given to Kello for violating Tottie is being 'douked (. . .) in the trough, and kicked (. . .) round the yard, he does not lose his job because he is good with horses and he is an hero with horses' (35-36), this shows the extent to which female gender is treated with disdain in the patriarchal society. This raises the question of the negative treatment on female gender and the psychological impact of such on them. Glover presents Tottie as the innocent soul who is blamed for being raped by both women and men who regard her as a girl without any value; she exposes the inability of many women to see their gendered positions. The rape is being represented as a crime against Kello instead of Tottie who has been sexually, emotionally and socially abused which reveals the role of sexism within the society that corresponds with Germaine Greer's view in *The Whole Woman* (2000) that a woman's body is a battlefield where she fights for liberation. It is through her body that oppression works, reifying her, sexualising her, victimising her, disabling her (135). This shows the woman's body as a medium through which she is brought under continuous socio-cultural control. Ellen divulges the general opinion about Tottie's unfeminine and unaccepted behaviour:

Ellen you know what they say? 'Well, no wonder,' they say. 'No wonder

what happened, just look at the way she behaves, poor Kello, poor man, it wasn't his fault, he'd had a few, mind, why not, at the Kirn, and what was she doing there out in the field-asking for it.' That's what they say. (50-51).

Ellen's words echo Jhally and Katz's (2001) and Messner's (2001) about rape being promoted by cultural ideas that linked masculinity with aggression, strength, control and domination which are in contrast to women's subjugation and abuse. Ellen's words also expose women as relatively incapable of controlling their emotions, sexual desires and vulnerability and also show them as victims who suffer greatly from rejection of the community. Seeing *Bondagers* as a performance raises questions about how women define and value women's work, the women show indentured lives with their roles as mothers, workers, mentors and lovers. Elisabeth Mahoney observes in *The Guardian* (2001) that the performance of *Bondagers* is a deeply sympathetic production glistering with engaging performances especially from Tottie and Sara. Although Glover explores female sexual exploitation through the act of rape and abuse in *Bondagers*, she also reveals more on economic exploitation which incorporates other types of exploitation such as physical, psychological, emotional, social exploitations of women in the male dominated society. Adrienne Scullion observes in *Contemporary Scottish Women Writers* (2006) that Glover confronts difficult issues of class, land, ownership and belonging, and parallels the agricultural exploitation of the land with the economic and in one brutal rape, the sexual exploitation of women (103).

As Glover presents the audiences/readers with the stories of these six farm women, she also succeeds in analysing some of the perspectives used to measure femininity.

These bondagers are women hired at the annual hiring fairs by various farm hands who require female workers to work with them when they themselves are being hired on the condition of their own employment by landowners. The play describes women as economic bondagers who are denied autonomy, culturally subverted and socially suppressed in text and performance. This is explored through the issue of economic instability in Glover's depiction of these six women whose daily and yearly lives depends on how best they are able to work and if the farm owner still require them as farm hands, else they are in search of other farms. These women have a tenuous, uncertain and lonely existence during their stay on the farm where they form bonds with the land and seek each others' companionship. Although these women have a source of income, their lives revolve around the male owners who determine capabilities. This reveals the subjugation and overuse of women strength within the society which also depicts economic exploitation. Glover uses Ellen's description of the bondager's life to summarise the societal view of the female gender as property and a representation of land. Ellen reiterates in Act One, Scene Ten:

Ellen Don't be ridiculous, Ellen,' says the maister. 'We can't do away with the Bondage. I can't employ a man who hasn't a woman to work with him. One pair of horse to every fifty acre, one hind for every pair of horse, one bondager for every hind. That's the way it's done,' he says. 'I'm all for progress,' he says, 'but I won't do away with the bondage,' he says. 'We need the women. Who else would do the work? . . . Women's work, for women's pay.' (28-29)

Apart from analysing the exploitation of the female labour force in the mid-nineteenth century agricultural system in the Lowlands, *Bondagers* explores the

importance of women re-analysing their situations and recognising their powers and the limitations. Ellen's opinion of Maister's description of the bondagers reveals another facet of women's situation and treatment in Glover's play in relation to their importance to the society. Women are seen as multi-taskers who try to perfect their own domestic works, and also serve as the beautifying elements for the men to earn their social status but this bondage position silences them as they are only regarded in line with the work they do.

While Glover's *Bondagers* exposes female exploitation through physical, sexual and economical rape, Okoh's *Edewede* reveals female circumcision as a form of socio-cultural silence. One notices that both writers explore metaphorical violence through physical violence against their bodies. Okoh notices that female circumcision reduces the female autonomy in the society whereby Edewede's character is portrayed as determined and audible woman who refuses to allow the younger generation of women to be denied their autonomy through female circumcision. Edewede's rebellion against the practice that may be seen as a means of upholding their culture is the breaking of the transmission chain amongst three generation of women in the society. Okoh makes Edewede to serve as a link between the other two which are the old and the new generation which provides a clash between the new and the old culture.

Edewede disregards what her society perceives as the importance of female circumcision, which they believe helps to keep females' purity by avoiding promiscuity, uphold a man's social honour and maintain female dignity. *Edewede* explores how the custom of female circumcision bonds these women in companionship that helps them live through the experience. Edewede is faced with

making a choice. She either allows her only surviving daughter go through the same crude process of female circumcision or disallow her and break away from the tradition she feels inhibit women's autonomy in her culture. The playwright exposes the exploitation of women's bodies in some parts of West Africa which allows some opprobrious practice she believes are culturally imposed on women against their wish by customs and religion. Okoh observes in *Theatre and Women's Human Rights in Nigeria* (2002) that all the time wasted in nursing wilfully inflicted injuries in favour of female circumcision can be used in pursuit of basic means of subsistence which can be achieved through the contribution of the female quota to the economy of the community. This is observed by A. Ezeigbo in *Gender Issues in Nigeria: A Feminine Perspective*, (1996) that:

In most communities where female circumcision is practised, the aim is primarily to ensure virginity before marriage and chastity throughout married life. The excision of the clitoris would ensure that a woman derives no pleasure from sex. It would also reduce her capacity to achieve orgasm . . . it seems to give girls sound moral upbringing than to rely on the unnatural mutilation of their bodies to make them upright (35).

Communities that practice female circumcision do not publicise the adverse complications leaving people unaware of the dangers involved and thus they continue in their ignorance. *Edewede* discusses this barbaric practise being imposed on innocent girls, its implications and general belief in some West African countries like Nigeria, and the Republic of Benin. To countries that practice female circumcision, it is assumed to have cultural and religious values which advocates of cultural relativism have argued in its support to be continued. The play opens with a dialogue between a grandmother, Ebikere who tries to cajole her granddaughter,

Oseme, to undergo the assumed rite of⁷ passage into adulthood but Ebikere is opposed by her daughter-in-law, Edewede who does not support the idea.

In *Edewede*, Okoh shows the older generation of women as the upholders of the rite of passage and tradition. She exposes Ebikere as the one who encourages female circumcision to continue:

EBIKERE: Circumcision is part of our culture. My mother was circumcised.

So also were your grandmothers; great grandmothers; and great
great grandmothers. It is a rite that every woman in this land goes
through . . . your bravery in the camp of circumcision will be the
pride of your family and lineage (3).

While these young girls do not have the idea of the painful experience they are about to go through, Ebikere believes that circumcision is an occasion that every young girl should look forward to anxiously. On the one hand, it is the barbaric excision of the clitoris in a crude way; but since it brings the society pride, they have to undergo the process in order to honour their societal values. On the other hand, it is a moment of bravery and heroism that allows these females to show the dichotomies of the public and private sphere which underscore African patriarchal victimisation of women. These views are also summarised in Fauziya Kassindja's *Do They Hear When You Cry?* (1998) description of what female circumcision entails by those who have gone through the whole process:

I've heard that during the procedure, four women spread your legs wide apart and hold you down so you can't move. And then, the eldest woman

⁷ Rite of passage in drama is described by Adrienne Scullion in *Feminine Pleasures and Masculine Indignities: Gender and Community in Scottish Drama* (1995) as a 'turn or series of ceremonies or rituals of initiation' (8).

takes a knife that is used to cut hair and scrapes your woman parts off. There are no painkillers, no anaesthesia. The knife isn't sterilised. Afterwards, the women wrap your hips to your knees and you have to stay in bed for forty days so the wound can close. (13)

Although several descriptions have been made by different writers about how circumcision is done and its assumed benefits to the society practising it, the Nigerian society which Okoh portrays its own practice is not explained in detail. Some of the reasons why communities practice female circumcision apart from being seen as form of good tradition includes religious purpose, cleanliness, preservation of virginity, better marriage prospect, enhancement of male sexual pleasure amongst others. Okoh however exposes that the excision of the clitoris is deeply rooted in tradition and African mythology which allows the older generation represented by Ebikere to hold firm as it is their believe that such practice helps to maintain social cohesiveness and harmony. This society sees the clitoris as a 'peanut' (39) that causes confusion, impurity and imperfection which should be 'carved out of its pod' during the initiation ceremony before young girls move from girlhood to womanhood.

Also, it is at this initiation camp that girls learn the taboos of the land, their future roles as wives and mothers which eventually makes them the stereotypes of their mothers in the society. Edewede believes that the unchanging culture does not benefit anybody, rather it claims innocent girls' lives, leaves some with psychological trauma, but in as much as the society sees nothing wrong with the practise, it must continue. This is revealed in the argument between her and Ebikere:

EDEWEDE: What about those girls who do not return to the village and are never even mourned, after bleeding to death? Regarded as sacrifice, they are left behind for the vultures to feed on. Tell her also about

the girls who do not live long enough to see the days of their marriage and motherhood because of the infection contracted during the operation. Go on, tell her about all of them. (6-7)

As mentioned earlier, the dangers such as anxiety, severe depression, psychosomatic illnesses in the process are not publicised, which Edewede tries to use against its acceptance by other women. Edewede's zeal to effect change in the course of such tradition that does not benefit the private sphere but glorifies the public sphere makes Ebikere see her as a woman with vile words, a woman not well brought up, a woman who does not know her womanly role in her marital home, a woman without cultural heritage and a woman without any sense of humility. Ebikere sees that Edewede's action goes in line with masculine power of asserting one's position of dominance and maintaining audience in the presence of inhibiting powers. This portrays the societal perception of any woman who dares to be heard, powerful and resilient to some cultural practices that makes her valueless.

The remembrance of the victims of circumcision like her sister and her elder daughter in that same society makes her determined to change the situation which also helps to prepare the mind of other women of her generation. Edewede's elder sister's death creates in her the fear of female circumcision, as does that of her elder daughter, Ize who dies of infection contracted after the operation makes her more determined. She is encouraged by Erialala who sees the women's lack of voice as a central problem; it hinders them from expressing themselves and contributes to the underlying inferiority complex. This is a means of undervaluing femininity, which makes these females 'cripples' and incapable of doing anything reasonable for themselves as they have not been given alternative tools to protect themselves

against any form of social pressure. Therefore, the older generation of women find their means of survival on the pride of their 'self and social' honour. Edewede's reply to Erialala's question if she is really a cripple baffles the latter who feels such retrogressive traditions that makes women powerless can be changed if only they are willing, determined and ready to change it for their own good.

EDEWEDE: What do you expect? We live in a land where men are born to dish out commands and women to carry them out and suffer in silence.

ERIALALA: You are a human being, capable of doing many things men can do if only you'd try. But you wouldn't try because your mind is weak, weakened by fear. That is why you lack confidence in yourself (22).

To the audiences/readers present at the production in the University of Ilorin Performing Arts department, Okoh's writing in this respect present female characters as liberating forces who acknowledge the importance of their sexuality and autonomy. Erialala's call for action to Edewede to change her situation and that of other women in her society or else see the death of innocent girls continue is a step towards their gender autonomy. She summons courage to use her voice, to dismiss her fear and resignation and to see herself as a superior being instead of crying and lamenting over issues that can be changed only if she is determined. She raises Edewede's consciousness at that time to use her anger and the grief over the death of her daughter to reverse the order of things if she does not want her only remaining daughter to go through the female circumcision process. Jane Pilcher and Imelda Whelehan recognise in *50 Key Concepts in Gender Studies* (2004) that consciousness-raising is taken from the idea of 'speaking pains to recall pains' used

by peanuts during the Chinese revolution as noticed by Alice Echols in *Daring to be Bad: Radical Feminism in America 1967-1975* (1989). Echols sees consciousness-raising as a form of idea whereby women should regularly come in small groups to recount their own lives and how they 'became' women (84). Pilcher and Whelehan see that such consciousness raising group of women are expected:

to look askance at their own lives and realise the extent to which they share with other women of various backgrounds and ages; that their problems are not unique and individual, but rather all too common and produced by wider social relations and institutions (17).

Such consciousness raising groups help women to relocate themselves within the society, hence they are seen as another element of female discourse that strengthens the female bond. Although this consciousness raising group has its own advantages and disadvantages, writers such as Carol William Payne (1973) and Susan Brownmiller (2000) have identified women's problems associated with it which will be discussed later in this study with some of Okoh's female characters. Okoh's call for action is similar to Walker's published novel, *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992) where she purports to document female circumcision in Africa. At the end of the novel, readers of different genders, ages, and viewpoints are educated about the destructive effects of female circumcision and are ready to stop the act infringing on female autonomy. Okoh and Walker's writings on female circumcision are different in their analysis as Okoh, as an African woman living in Africa, presents a way forward by encouraging women to take actions that will stop the act while Walker sees the stock characterisations of her Africa female characters from the western view.

Although readers cannot separate Walker's view of the female gender from their representation of social and racial stereotypes, one also sees Walker's womanism as a theory that calls for autonomy through the conscious efforts of knowing more than what is considered good for the females in any patriarchal society. Glover and Okoh explore consciousness as a means of creating female autonomy in different ways that are not always relatable. While Glover creates Rona as an individual with the inner consciousness to recognise the unjust society that limits her femininity, Okoh's individual consciousness leads to group consciousness. Glover's depiction of Rona in *The Seal Wife* and her coming to terms with the inequality that exists between a woman and a man in the society where gender roles are strictly defined by cultural obligations in favour of the male gender makes her refuse the socio-cultural expectations of a woman. Despite her constant use of her voice to reject this visible silence of the female gender, she is also constantly neglected by Alec who represents the masculine principle rather than the male gender as he is also seen as an outcast, living on the edge of the community and surviving on his illegal seal hunting. Rona realises this in her final failed plea with Alec whereby he refuses to acknowledge her difference and her needs; it is at this juncture she perceives that all attempts to save her relationship and herself seems to have failed which gives her the option of choosing between self-silence and self-audibility. Like Okoh's Edewede, Glover presents Rona as a woman whose life depends on choice. She encounters a situation which will either help to assert her own individual needs or to fulfil the societal obligation towards others that will limit her to the domestic domain, destroy her emotionally, physically and mentally without achieving anything. Ksenija Horvat observes in *Scottish Women Writers Against Zero Visibility* (2009) that:

Glover offers a powerful criticism against the double stands of patriarchal where the feminine is always seen as the other, the inferior, the chaotic and the godless, something that needs to be subdued and tightly controlled (5).

Horvat's observation of Glover's dramatisation of her female characters as the 'other' that needs to be guarded in order to boost the men's ego through the women's obligations, nature and nurture. Such a belief is observed in Rona's husband, Alec who believes motherhood is an avenue to tame women's wildness. He sees it as a compulsory obligation for every woman which makes him think Rona's wild thoughts and behaviour can be controlled. He feels motherhood will also help Rona to settle down emotionally and make her happier, but Agnes sees motherhood as an additional duty that will only keep her busy. During the dialogue that ensues between the mother and the son, Glover reveals males' perception towards motherhood as something that gives all women joy which Rona proves wrong:

ALEC: A baby . . . she'll be settled now, surely. She'll be happier when there's a bairn to look after.

AGNES: Busier. She'll be busier. . . (36)

Rona breaks the law that governs the society that expects every woman to be a nurturer. Alec affirms earlier that "the laws round here are made to be broken".(18). Alec thinks that his companionship and the arrival of the baby will make Rona realise the socio-cultural expectation of women, but unfortunately Rona becomes more alienated and unhappy which is due to his denial of love and self. Instead of Alec realising his fault, he preoccupies himself with the masculine ego and accuses his mother of taking sides with Rona. This accusation does reflect the womanist sense of bond between women who share similar experiences and hence love each other, sexually or platonically. This is later confirmed by Rona when she questions

Agnes about her perseverance at the point of her decision to leave in the pursuit of her happiness:

RONA: Why did you- do you- never take sides? You watch us both, and calm us both, but you never take sides. You never tried to stop Alec hunting, did you? You never tried to make me feel I had to stay, those times when you knew I felt like walking out.

AGNES: I couldn't take only your part, because Alec's my son and I love him. I couldn't take Alec's part only, because- you're a woman and so am I (56).

Agnes's response to Rona's question reveals her as a cultural woman who is ready to accept the unpleasantness of marriage even after Alec's father walked away. Glover represents her as a self-contained mother figure whose experience is based on duty, self-limitation and self-sacrifice that mirrors the nature versus nurture debate of femalehood. Agnes diligently obeys the societal expectation of womanhood by staying behind to nurture her son since she feels she holds her allegiance strongly to him, to bring him up and be a good mother. Agnes' character reflects what Alice Rossi describes in J. Sayer's *Biological Politics* (1982) as biological differences rooted in the body which allows a woman to always take care of the child better than a man:

as a consequence, equality between the sexes should not be achieved through women devolving childcare responsibilities to others. Rather, equality should be achieved through securing proper societal recognition for women's distinctive, biologically rooted childcare abilities (148-9).

Glover presents Agnes as a single mother whose identity is socio-culturally constructed without a choice in the society that does not believe single parenthood is

either morally or socially appropriate. Agnes and Alec are seen as outsiders in their own society, living in the margins of the community. Agnes and Alec's situation is a way of seeing the relationship between gender and citizenship which allows the community to be able to view historical exclusion of women from citizenship and see contemporary women's inequality. This same problem is encountered by Okoh's Bharo which will be discussed later in this chapter. Glover uses Rona's character to detest her mother-in-law's attitude of mental and social colonisation which denies her citizenship; Rona is not ready to sacrifice her own freedom for motherhood or nurturing; this reveals that her appearance into Alec's life is a way of disorganising the structured male domain. Although Agnes confesses that there are days she feels like going away as well, she is drawn back by the responsibilities associated with motherhood that she finds difficult to neglect. This is reflected in her answers to Rona about why she never leaves the sea:

AGNES: . . . Oh- it was never the place I loved, it was David. But – a person
can belong to a place . . . without understanding why. (58).

While Agnes tries to make Rona see reasons for her staying behind after the husband's departure, Rona sees it as a cultural obligation that suppresses her physical and emotional entity and that has limited her self-expression. This denies Agnes the significance and individuality in her own way as she performs what is expected of her by nurturing her son rather than trying to re-evaluate her personal and cultural values. Agnes' inability to be married to a man developed into lack of self-expression that causes her and Alec to be regarded as outcasts in a society that does not respect a single mother. Although, both characters are described to have created a distanced niche for themselves, the playwright creates two other characters, Cath and Dot, who

constantly disrupt their privacy. Glover expresses a sense of sisterhood in the characters of Cath and Dot. Dot assumes the assertive masculine role in her treatment of Cath, but she hardly notices anything going on around her. While Dot remains in her own world of being an introvert, a sense of sisterhood is explored through Cath's depiction in the play, who in her discussion of Rona's pregnancy with Dot extends friendship to her fellow woman:

CATH: Well, I'm telling you. She's pregnant. . . . And that'll be why she doesn't go out with him anymore! They used to be out together all hours, all weathers.

She's been on her own, mostly . . . lately . . . I like her: Rona. . . .

We have watched her all these months. I 'd like to know her (29).

Cath's expressive nature is observant to every little detail especially the one that relates with Alec, Rona and Agnes. She is aware of every move and notices every little change that takes place. She likes Rona but cannot move close to her because of the societal view which makes her an outcast since she is associated with Alec and the family is referred to as outsiders who have created a separate world between them and the society.

The concept of sisterhood is examined by Okoh's *Edewede*. The coming together of the women described by Okoh for the first time to educate each other about the female body's autonomy is a great step towards making their voices heard in the public domain. Edewede and these other women of her age group create an unbroken bond amongst them to rise against their agonising indigenous culture that make women weaklings, properties and objects of sexual gratification, after being enlightened by Mama Nurse. This effort of Mama Nurse, Erialala and Edewede to

educate these other women on the complications of female circumcision practice make them determined to eradicate the practise and the cultural beliefs behind it. At the end of the meeting, these women disapprove of female circumcision and the society's justification that it promotes female purity and cleanliness and prevents women's promiscuity. Instead, they see it as health hazard, psychological torture and physical mutilation which make them powerless and voiceless. Okoh's Edewede is a motivated woman with a sense of sisterhood to help other women who suffer in silence. She calls them into action by seeing female circumcision as a form of slavery imposed on women to dominate them in the society that sees no value in femalehood except for their domesticity, obedience and ignorance:

EDEWEDE: Our mothers practised circumcision

Because they knew nothing about anything

Except for laws and taboos imposed on them

To stop them from thinking for themselves

So that from childhood, they learn

To be shy, silent and docile.

Until they see themselves

As objects for men's pleasure

They got so accustomed to this condition

That they see any deviation from it as a crime . . . (37).

Here, Okoh explores women's shyness, silence and docility which allows them to surrender to the masculine power that creates fear and ignorance in them and that reiterates a psychoanalytic view of bringing up children in the society. The belief that a woman is expected to be polite, shy and dependant men is readdressed by Edewede and Mama Nurse's explanation of how the older generation of women were enslaved

by such traditions, which infuriates these market women who have just been educated and want to stop the practise immediately. These women see the practice from a new perspective from that moment on, and develop a determined mindset that none of their children will go through it any more. Eriala prepares these women to oppose the practice when she asks,

ERIALA: But woman! For once in your life, stop and think.

Think for yourselves. Think about yourselves.

Think! Think! Think!

Do you think with your brain or bottom?

Do you think with your eyes or bottom?

Do you think with your heart or bottom?

Go on! Open your mouth! Speak out! (39).

Immediately the women sense the truth in what has been said, the question of female circumcision brings about the conscious effort to think about the evil inflicted on them by their husbands, brothers, fathers and sons. The use of 'Think, Think, Think' (39) is placed as an emphasis to call these women into the intellectual reasoning that the men and older generations have denied them. At that stage, the women view female circumcision as a gender order that is a patterned system of ideological and material practice to recreate femininity and masculinity. They now reason that circumcision does not stop a woman from admiring a man, lusting after a man nor having secret desires for any man they wish, which allow them see female circumcision as an pointless exercise besides a painful experience.

Eriala's enlightenment make these women see themselves as being capable of sexual enjoyment as well rather than being mere objects for men's sexual pleasure. Their

behaviour mirrors J. T. Wood's assertion in *Gendered Lives: Communication, Gender, and Culture* (2005) that in combining conventional femininity (sexuality) and masculinity (weapons and violence), women challenge the sex/gender divide and personify erotic fantasies that merge sex and power (279). The coming together of these women help them to realise that they can combine their own feminine attributes with that of the masculine weapons in order to propose a change to their existing situation. The women use their inherent power and the masculine attribute of assertive language to ignite public sentiment about women's fragility and vulnerability. This mirrors Julia Kristeva's view in *The Powers of Horror: Essays on Abjection* (1982) that women need to make language their own in order to acknowledge their feminine experiences and present it in new ways. By using language, these women destabilise the phallic system of operation through their clitoral autonomy.

Eriala and Edewede's motivation to these women through their use of voice help the readers recognise Walker's second aspect of the womanist principle's women-centeredness which creates an avenue that allows women to seek unity amongst themselves. They bond collectively and publicly to end this form of unrecognised female oppression through what Okoh calls 'bottom power' or 'lock it up'; they decide to starve themselves and their husbands of any sexual enjoyment which eventually leads to their leaving town in order not to fall into the temptation of breaking the agreement amongst them. This form of sex strike is noticeable in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* in which women deny their husbands sex to end the war between the Athens and Sparta. Ironically, Okoh's play seems to be synonymous to Aristophanes' play because of the sex strike, but looking into the two plays, the

readers discover that while Aristophanes presents a physical war with emotional, social and psychological trauma, Okoh presents psychological war with physical, emotional and social disability amongst the women in their society.

Eventually, the meeting leads to Edewede's public repudiation by the older generation of women who sees the determination of other women as an act which originates from her jealousy, which makes these other women move into solitude as well. This reiterates the sense of sisterhood that Oyeronke Oyewunmi in *African Women in Feminism: Reflecting on the Politics of Sisterhood* (2003) views as political solidarity, which speaks for women's activism and helps in shared oppression, common victimization, community interests, solidarity, and collective activism. This type of solidarity binds them with Edewede, a woman whom they see as someone trying to help secure the future for female children, and to save them from crying over the loss of loved ones or keeping awake throughout the night to watch over the infected ones from the camping grounds. One of the audiences at the performance of *Edewede* in *The Performing Arts, Kwara State* (2005) see how Edewede demonstrates the importance of female solidarity as these women come together to secure their future with the hope of liberating themselves.

These group of women need change to take effect as soon as it can as they are determined not to go back to the town leaving their husbands to take over the nurture and nurture aspects of the domestic domain. Their action explores a sense of true sisterhood that helped them attain the autonomy they longed for which the men find difficult to cope with especially in the domestic domain that is left in their custody. This is expressed in their different conversations during the meeting which highlights the plights of women in the society, what they go through in their respective homes

without being appreciated, and how they are expected to be enslaved and remain silenced through the practice of female circumcision that make them sexual toys for men. It is at that stage that the men realise what they have often taken for granted in the female gender, especially in terms of taking care of the domestic domain which they always see is an easy task; some of them immediately call for the change of practice while some remain adamant and view the women's actions as unacceptable in the patriarchal society.

Likewise in Glover's *Bondagers*, bondagers see themselves to be in an exploitative situation whereby they need their freedom, they yearn for a circumstance where they will not be owned by male hinds any more but be hired directly by the farm owners and given equal pay and opportunities. Kirstin in Scottish Borders, Theatre Concerts (2008) posted on the website that:

“The term apparently comes from the fact that bondagers were poor women without a man to provide for them, which meant that they were bound to manual work as they were not educated. The biggest goal for a bondager was to learn to sew so that they might get some work in a house. They certainly didn't see themselves as slaves, more like servants without the security of knowing where they would be living in the next month or two, they were paid, not well but paid never the less; they were contracted, in the case of those working on the farms for a season; and they could if they wished leave before their contracted time was up, however if they did they knew it would be difficult for them to get further work”. (online)

They are presented as women workers struggling with their roles as workers, mothers, mentors, and lovers:

Sara (quite cheerful) Tinklers, that's what we are!

Tottie Penny Pies. We are not penny pies.

Maggie A six-pound rise would do me fine, and a new house even finer- but
what we really need is an end to the bondage . . . Lots of folk are
beginning to speak out against the bondage. (26).

Maggie's words surprise the other women who do not seem convinced with her course to stop this form of female oppression. Horvat (1999) compares the bondage system to slavery which allows one to find similarities between the Hiring fair and the slave fairs in America (70). Horvat's comparison of the hiring to slavery exposes the treatment of women as acquisitions who must remain silent as long as they are owned by a man. This is almost the situation which the bondagers found themselves whereby they had to earn the money equivalent to the rent of the cottage in which they stay. They do the same work as the men, but earn lesser than these men.

Maggie, Edewede and other women of Edewede's age group reiterate Judith Butler's observation in analysing Lacanian theory of language in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999) that:

Women are said to "be" the phallus in the sense that they maintain the power to reflect or represent the "reality" of self-grounding postures of the masculine subject, a power which, if withdrawn, would break up the foundational illusions of the masculine subject position (58).

Butler's view is reflected in Glover's characterisation of Rona whose putting on and off of the skin symbolises a form of destabilising the masculine public domain. Rona's shedding off of the seal skin in the play represents women who withdraw from self in favour of selflessness; it also represents the loss of their identity and their sense of self as well (which is depicted at the beginning of the play), required to adhere to their cultural obligations. This makes Rona powerless and languish in silence at first, but her putting on of her seal skin in the final act reveals her use of

voice, which makes her powerful by returning to her 'self' which is not relegated to what the society expects of her as a woman since it is almost impossible for a woman to remain in both worlds. A woman has the option of choosing between either being audible or silent, which is an important aspect of womanist theory which allows a woman to find support in the midst of victimisation and opposition. Glover characterises Rona as a woman with an assertive and expressive voice at some stage in the play, which the reader notices in her conversation with Agnes:

RONA: I was swimming.

AGNES: On your own?

RONA: On my own. (15)

Rona sees beyond the confined space of the masculine domain that has always been the main determinant which defines and limits Agnes' language. She ventures into the male world through her zeal to have a place of her own at the end of the play. She refuses to be sealed in Alec's world of oppression and becomes his hunted soul with a silenced voice. Rona, the seal wife, examines the emotional element in human nature where a woman lavishes unconditional love on a man who marginalises her in the relationship to obey the social norms that he feels will allow him to display his masculine 'rites'. Rona leaves everything behind in order to love Alec, only to be treated with disdain in his hunting spirit which analyses his emotional change towards her. Okoh also explores man's emotional change through Mr Adudu's infidel attitude towards his wife, Mrs Adudu. He neglects her, befriends other younger women whom he feels can satisfy his sexual urge and make him feel younger, at the detriment of his wife's happiness which exposes her voiceless situation.

Metaphorically, Glover uses Rona's inaudibility in her dream to reveal that when women are tied within the oppressive masculine culture and societal obligations, they are made to do things against their own wish. Like the characters of Anowa, Mary, Eulalie discussed in the previous chapter, they are limited to the domestic sphere, they feel like voicing out their subjugation, but they cannot because such freedom is an unacceptable behaviour from women in the society and those that dare to speak against such oppressions are crushed within the male dominated system. This however, makes the women inaudible in the hunter's territory which Glover describes in the character of Alec, who wishes to overpower Rona's "unacceptable" behaviour.

This same system of oppression is what Eriaye in *The Mannequins* detests. From the beginning, Okoh presents her as a woman with a voice, who sees her self-worth in keeping her dignity away from men like Mr Adudu, who wants to acquire women by luring them with money and material things. Speaking against the aspect of patriarchy that limits women's abilities, Eriaye's believes so much in woman's education as a means of liberation which make her assertive, expressive and powerful through language. She expresses this to a male colleague who is stunned at her determination and her unyielding attitude to sexual male advances.

ERIAYE: I've always wanted to be able to look at the world around me and paint it in words or in images. (30)

Eriaye intends to gain more audibility rather than be judged in terms of the economic value placed on femalehood in some part of West African countries, which view femininity as a means of getting financial gain by being married out especially to the highest bidder which is another area to be considered in later chapter of this study.

Such females are either sold out into marital slavery to the highest bidder either with love or not, or they are often exploited domestically. Okoh explores determined female characters whose refusal to allow this retrogressive masculine acquisition inhibit their fight against a patriarchal system that devalues femininity. This is also analysed in Glover's characterisation of the fourteen year old Tottie whose realisation that she has an inner ability to write within herself depicts a conscious effort to express her audibility even though no one listens to her part of what leads to Kello's death. Tottie is seen as a 'daftie' raped by the plough man, Kello.

Glover depicts the character of Liza in *Bondagers* as an unwilling female who is not ready to fall victim to patriarchy due to marriage and motherhood. Liza's rejection of roles expected of her mirrors an aspect of Walker's analysis of womanish nature that helps to re-evaluate the social view of motherhood in relation to marriage. Liza sees motherhood and marital obligations as confinements which make her reject both ideas in her discussion with Maggie; she views it as an avenue to bond her again while being use as a farm hand. She loves a life of freedom, to stay in Canada with what she has heard:

Liza coming in over Sara's words) I'm not getting wed. not yet. Not for years.

The sooner you wed, the more bairns you get.

Maggie That's what you wed for – bairns!

Liza Why?

Maggie Why? Why?! . . . Why, they keep the roof over you when they're older, that's why. They keep things going. Wull and Tam will soon be half-yins, getting halfpay, and when they're grown there'll be Jim and Drew, and the girls will make bondagers in time. Meg can work with her daddy. Netta can

work with Wull or Tam. It'll be grand. We'll can take our pick at the

Hiring. Ay, we'll be easy then. Soon enough. (31-32)

Maggie's perception of marriage and children unmasks the societal attitude towards how a woman is perceived in relation to her male and female children. Although Glover characterises Maggie to assume an assertive position with a commanding manner of speech in the way she reprimands Liza's view of the difficult life of a bondager, she is also seen as an upholder of tradition in her analysis of marriage and motherhood. Maggie's view that the grown up male children would become hind while the female ones will become bondagers and will give them better chances of being selected fast at the hiring fair reveals the societal bound of what the feminine and the masculine gender should be. This is also reiterated in Okoh's portrayal of Ebikere in *Edewede* which will be discussed further. Maggie's use of Scots allows further thoughts about women's domestic responsibilities of passing across different traditions to the children. Maggie uses pure Scots while Ellen is cut between two different worlds of code mixing Scots language and English language, the latter which is believed to be the language accepted in the public domain.

Okoh presents Bharo and Eriaye in *The Mannequins* in a similar manner. Bharo is depicted as a woman with a mindset of accepting her stereotyped domestic role in the society. She is voiceless from the beginning of the play accepts Mr Adudu's sexual advances, and believes in polygamy and the respects of husband's rights. Her bad use of English language is being mocked by everybody in the office because she hardly says anything correctly and she is not willing to learn; rather she believes in having a rich husband, satisfying him with whatever he wants, and if possible, will travel all over the world to be someone's wife. As she sees this as the ultimate role of any

female, Eriaye's view of femininity is contrary to Bharo's. Both female characters difference are exposed in a discussion with Bharo and her colleagues:

BHARO: Right again. And I have been to Italy, to France, to Japan, to India, to America and to the continent. I can even boast that I know England more than most Englishers.

EMIATOR: You mean Englishmen?

BHARO: Englishmen or Englishers, that's not my business. My interest is in their money and their shops. When I finish my business, I return home. . . .

EKATA: Bharo, your legs blue, today (appropriate colour of pantyhose). Did you dye them?

BHARO: You mean I'm wearing emh-emh-emh.

EMIATOR: A pair of panty-hose

BHARO: Yes, yes. That's what they called it. The latest design in Oxford street. . . .(32).

Bharo's use of incorrect English language can be viewed from two different angles. On the one hand, Bharo's language is that of an uneducated, illiterate, unassertive and passive woman who only tries to impress through her dressing and acquired feminine acceptability, while on the other hand, she tries to incorporate herself into the public domain by speaking English despite not being correct. She reduces the esteem associated with English language as a man's/public language of superiority which tends to make other language speakers irrelevant or silent. For example, Deborah Cameron notes in *The Feminist Critique of Language* (1995) that:

Even where it seems that women could speak if they chose, the conditions imposed on their lives by the society may make this a difficult or

dangerous choice. Silence can also mean censoring yourself for fear of being ridiculed, attacked, or ignored (4).

Cameron's view of female's silence and linguistic acceptability is depicted in Bharo's character whereby her feminine view is placed on the fear and mockery of the way she portrays her femininity and the language she uses. Her intelligence is measured by the way she communicates, speaks and also in the passive way she deals with her boss and other colleagues. Okoh does not only reveal the acceptance of femininity, silence and audibility by all of her female characters and how they strive for recognition in their use of voice, she also explores the economic and political situation and the labour market of the country in question whereby who you know is more important than the acquisition of certificates and experience. Bharo's connection with the her boss reveals the socio-economic injustice being perpetuated amongst the working class in situations where femininity is sometimes used as a yardstick for promotion as long as these females can succumb to male sexual advances which is often referred to as bottom power in the Nigerian context. In such instances, femininity is used to measure labour and production which disallows some females and males to have their rewards or promotions at the appointed time like Ekata notices in his words. Ekata sees this as a form of male victimisation which is hardly noticed by women writers as such oppression makes the male gender become victims of their own laws within the society. This reveals that not only the females suffer in patriarchal system; the male gender also does, as Bharo's inability to tell her colleagues where she gets all the money she uses on her expensive travelling and lifestyle irritates Ekata who sees the economic collapse and inspires this opinion:

EKATA: I pity you. You are all body but no soul. Just like the mannequins
in the supermarket. They look so attractive you think they are human

beings. But have a close look at them, they are nothing but dead bodies

(34).

Okoh's view of female voicelessness is summarised by Ekata who sees a woman with Bharo's attributes to be a decorated mannequin in the supermarket because she will forever remain silent and weighted down under an endless array of accessories. Such mannequins or women with Bharo's attributes cannot voice out their grievances because they are mere dolls being given what the male dominated society deems fit for them at that stage. Ekata feels irritated by such behaviour and he is always ready to antagonise any woman he meets, which is reflected in his language choice that shows the knowledge he has about women's vulnerable position in the society. He believes every woman is the same, compounded by what he sees of Bharo in the office, who can hardly communicate in the public language (English) and has no qualifications but who will always get promoted on time and never lacks anything since she knows the people in authority.

EKATA: What else can one do? Words are the poor man's only weapon.

Even though they fall on deaf ears, we'll keep on talking. There is so much death. To be silent is like helping to dig graves for more corpses . . . (25).

Okoh uses Ekata's words at this point to debate the danger of women's silence which she expresses metaphorically- that silence is like digging one's grave. She publicises the masculine gender's hypocritical behaviour that helps a woman gets what she wants if she obeys their sexual advances, and punishes the unyielding ones. Ekata's view of the feminine gender as greedy, indecisive and powerless is seen as a result of his thirteen year old sister who dies from the complications of abortion due to Vesico

Vaginal Fistula (V.V.F). Although Ekata's sister's story baffles Eriaye a bit, she is at the same time aware of different odd situations women experience at various forms and levels which can hardly be avoided and how in the long run one becomes the victim of one's silence.

These two writers use their female characters' language to problematise women's position within society as it reveals how the patriarchal system silences women through the words they use because it regard the female gender as people, who should not be heard. For example in *Bondagers*, Glover depicts this by Maister's refusal to listen to Tottie's side of the story, how the hatred begins and what leads to Kello's death; instead he dismisses Maggie who tries to explain. Tottie's trance-like narration of how Kello dies in the last scene, Act Two, Scene Ten, reflects how women are denied most of their part in history. Tottie's part of the story draws attention to the actual truth; although she is denied her own part of the story to the Maister and has to live with the consequence of Kello's death. Mahoney in *The Guardian* (2001) comments on the lives of these six women especially that of Tottie and Sara that like the life portrayed, this is a group effort, and one deftly directed to bring out the precious moments of joy in these women's lives as sharply as the more regular moments of pain. To make Tottie the one character who really suffers is too easy: she would struggle even now, despite supposed equality in the labour force.

However, with reference to Tottie's issue, this expresses that when women are seen in the society, they are seen through the extreme act of rebellion, violence and attempt to actively speak out against different forms of oppression. This reiterates womanism as a theory that sees women as survivors in an oppressive system of multiple platforms where Tottie's recollection shows her as a female who negotiates

through her form of oppression to reveal the capability and worth other characters think she does not possess. Tottie's narration therefore allow readers to see how one's language expresses one's participation as speakers in the speech community, the roles we perform as speakers to publicise our feelings, attitudes, judgement and one's part of the story.

Similar to Maister's character, Okoh depicts Mr Adudu's behaviour as a man who never wishes for women's audibility. After being rejected by Eriaye, his conversation with her shows his view of women as people with little understanding, who can never think on their own or be productive intellectually since they hardly have desires except the ones lay down for them in the society or by their husband who takes the headship position and dictates the pace at which the woman moves in the family. This is similar to Lochhead's portrayal of Arnolphe in *Educating Agnes* in the previous chapter where women are treated with contempt and disgust due to their assumed gender characteristic as being passive. Ironically, the two female characters, Agnes and Eriaye, show that the female gender can achieve more than their limitations and the social perception of femininity. There is a sense of constant disapproval in Mr Adudu's confidence which the playwright has done by constructively placing Eriaye to challenge his words, 'no matter how tall and big you grow your mind would never know peace until you become the property of a man' (43). Like Alec, Mr Adudu is depicted as a man who so much believes that the domestic domain and silent attributes are the natural roles of a woman and that she should never challenge her position of marginality. Although Eriaye's assertive and audible character is seen with negativity by Mr Adudu, Okoh uses these words to

expose the stance of women in the society which corresponds with Bharo's patriarchal belief in her gender.

Furthermore, apart from using linguistic binary systems to characterise their females as powerful and powerless individuals, the two writers use binary characterisation of placing two opposite female characters beside each other to symbolise their view of female silence and audibility in a way to create the balance as portrayed in the plays. This helps readers to understand the social status and stand of each female character distinctively, which allows a critical analysis of their personalities as being pro or against the patriarchal culture. This is evidenced in *The Seal Wife* where Glover places Agnes and Rona beside each other to re-analyse different views of women towards socio-cultural motherhood. She portrays Rona's character as a woman with Simone de Beauvoir's Marxist stance in *The Second Sex* (1952) where she views woman as:

Engaged in a struggle to assert her individuality against the efforts of nature to enslave her to the species. Nature condemns woman to an animal-like maintenance of biological life and prevents her from engaging in the truly creative, human, transcendent work of producing culture for which nature rewards individual men. (48).

Rona devalues her social relationship of love and sacrifice to her husband and her daughter whom she regards as another hunted soul that will be relegated to the domestic sphere of Alec's world (men-dominated world). She confirms this in her disapproval of Alec's hunting, 'it's a girl, a daughter. Not another hunter. Another island. Another prey'. (45). She walks away from her marriage at the end of the play since she is not happy with the patriarchal system that links motherhood and silence to women's happiness which her mother-in-law becomes victim to at the beginning

of the play by raising Alec up on her own. Agnes views motherhood as an avenue to secure a place in marriage and be happier even if the husband is not present to help out. Although her view differs from that of Rona, she promises to raise her granddaughter up in Rona's way of life that detests feminine oppression through silence.

Agnes' motherhood is different from Okoh's description of Ebikere in *Edewede*. Despite both of them being silenced, Ebikere and Agnes are burdened with some responsibilities of bringing up their grandchildren but characterised with a different view of socio-cultural features. While Glover presents Agnes as a gentle mother-in-law, who is ready to support her daughter-in-law to achieve her desired freedom, Okoh portrays Ebikere as an aggressive, rigid and archaic mother-in-law who tongue-lashes Edewede because of her zeal to stop female circumcision. Ebikere's belief in tradition exposes the social acceptability of the practice; her unwillingness to change the barbaric culture that makes women's autonomy impossible. She sees the practice as a thing of joy, prestige and cultural identity for femininity. She takes Edewede as too determined, active and firm to be a woman in such a traditional society that does not respect a woman's opinion, but accepts women's silence as the pride of their husband, and thinks a well brought up female fulfils their domestic obligations. In the argument that ensues between both women of whether or not Osemera will go for the initiation ceremony that year, Edewede's total rejection of the system irritates Ebikere:

EDEWEDE: Please, go home. Go and take care of your other grandchildren.

That child is mine, 'Osemera'

EBIKERE: Listen to her. (Mimicking her) "That child is mine, Osemera".

Since when have women started to claim children as theirs in this village? If you want to become a man, why don't you first of all grow a tail between your thighs? Go on and do it. Let's see. . . . You have always been headstrong. Too stubborn! Humility means nothing to you. A well brought up woman should know her place and respect her limits. But you, oh no! You want to be in every place, have a word on every issue. You don't even know that you are only a wife in this house. And as such, your place is in the kitchen (7-8).

Ebikere does not see her action as subverting her daughter-in-law, thus, she blames her son for Edewede's zeal to change the long term traditional roles of women and for her claiming the paternity of a child. She reminds her daughter-in-law of the cultural position associated with her as a mere woman who has no right to decide on matters like that, which should be left in the hands of the elders or her husband as her action is no longer a wish but a selfish desire. Ebikere's view is the opposite of what Walker's womanism connotes which is identified by Patricia Hill-Collins. Hill-Collins' comments on Alice Walker's theory about the universality of womanism in *Sisters and Brothers: Black Feminists on Womanism and What's in a Name? Womanism, Black Feminism, and Beyond* (1996) reveals some of the reasons that hinders womanist theory from becoming a universal theory. She observes that:

Despite her disclaimer that womanists are "traditionally universalist," a philosophy invoked by her metaphor of the garden where room exists for all flowers to bloom equally and differently, Walker simultaneously implies that black women are somehow superior to white women because of this black folk tradition (59).

Some aspects of this black folk tradition in West Africa are condemned by Edewede and her contemporaries who see such traditions as limitations to the female gender through their womanist knowledge. Rather than becoming intimidated at that stage of

decision, Edewede voices out her anger and resistance, refuses to silence her desires, rejection and antagonism towards her mother-in-law's socio-cultural belief. Her determined mind baffles Ebikere who now sees her son as a weakling, questions his manliness and ability to govern his home, and a man with feminine attributes because he is voiceless like a vulnerable woman which hinders him from controlling his wife's excessive nature. Edewede rejects her husband as a weakling but sees his understanding in view of Walker's description of the collaboration between a man and a woman to help give the woman a voice rather than relegating her to the domestic domain alone, which Walker sees will help build confidence in such a woman.

Okoh's portrayal of Edewede's husband, Ordia, as being an understanding and a loving man reveals his acceptability of changing the tradition that allows a young girl to go through such an archaic and dehumanising practice. Ironically, Ordia is drawn to Edewede's wildness which he sees as an additional advantage to make the positive change needed in the society, although he warns her to be cautious of people especially his mother whose hatred towards his wife is glaring. Ordia's action portrays him as a male womanist who engages in exploring female motivations for redressing dented female history. Such men like Ordia are saddled with the responsibility of serving as allies in efforts to cripple patriarchal powers and effects on women, especially the ones that are ready for the change.

This draws a line of difference between Ordia and Alec in *The Seal Wife*; while Alec's hunting nature wishes to tame Rona's wildness, Ordia's male womanist feature seems accommodating of what society believes to be Edewede's excessive female behaviour even at the point of the public repudiation given to his wife.

Meanwhile, Alec and Mr Adudu's nature can be seen from almost the same perspective that wishes to dominate the female gender; Ordia's attitude longs for women who are able to break away from the socio-cultural relegations. Rona, Edewede, Tottie and other bondagers, Mrs Adudu and Eriaye represent the marginalised, the other, and the repressed women in any society as analysed by the writers who use these characters plights to summarise that of other women from any sphere or level of life. Their otherness exposes other women to be cautious of their present situations and to make amendments where need be to become active members of the community. Although making these changes requires lot of commitment and sacrifices as Simone de Beauvoir notices in *The Second Sex* (1952) which is reanalysed by Jane Pilcher and Imelda Whelehan (2004):

Women do not regain the status of being of being 'the one', according to de Beauvoir, because they largely accept this state of affairs. The woman may fail to claim the status of subject because she lacks definite resources, because she feels the necessary bond that ties her to man regardless of reciprocity and because she is often very well pleased with her role as the other (90).

De Beauvoir offers different ways that make women accept their position of 'other' in places where gender roles function in line with their responsibilities. In relation to these writers, such responsibilities include women's reproductive capacities which both writers analysed in some of their female characters as discussed earlier. The plot of Glover's *The Seal Wife* and Okoh's *Edewede* is built on the characters' rejection or acceptance of motherhood while the two other plays analyse the reproduction capacity. Rather than seeing the 'Otherness' of the female gender as a means that silences them and sets them up against a lifetime of inferiority which some of the

female characters try to change, these writers use the 'otherness' position to celebrate feminine culture, bodies and sexuality.

Although the female characters face the 'other' situation as women and in relation to community centeredness, Walker's womanist theory sees woman's otherness as a means which allows both self- empowerment and affiliation. In terms of male commitment to societal acceptance of women, the opposite is what Glover's Ellen describes her husband to be:

Ellen . . . 'Please God keep them dry for the flitting.' . . . He's a fair man, the maister. He's have built a new row of houses by now- if it wasn't for the Marquis raising the rent. 'I overlook small faults in good workman,' says the maister. 'I've lived here all my life,' he says. 'I know this place like I know my hand. I know the Border

Peasant: honest, industrious, godfearing . . . '

He never knew me, never knew my name even, till I set my cap at him. The first year of marriage, I still had the face of a bondager: white below, where the kerchief had been tied, the top of my cheeks and my nose dirt brown. The ladies stared, and smiled behind their fans. But I' m all pale now, I'm a proper lady now. Not once has he asked me what it was like: to live in the row, to work in the field. Not once . . . they've made a lady of me now. (47).

Ellen's observation of maister's view of women on the surface shows him as a man who wishes to incorporate her into the public decoration, but the above speech reveals that she is a bondager of another kind now; 'they've made a lady of me now' refers to her husband's moulding her into a doll of his liking which reiterates the earlier discussion of how a woman is used for a man's societal glory. To some extent

on the one hand, this is noticed in Ellen's freedom to first loosen her corset as soon as she joins other women in their place, and in her constant regret of being unable to conceive as a means of performing her wifely and womanly duty. On the other hand, it reveals Ellen as a bondager of another kind whereby the husband has moulded her into a frame of his liking which is noticed in her fearful expression about her inability to conceive. As a bondager in another category, she is a bit powerful, able to use her voice, to get away from the life of bondage, and to mingle with people of the higher class who are assertive and expressive.

While Edewede is encouraged by her self-determination and her husband, the other female characters like Ellen, Eriaye and Rona are encouraged by their inner ability of expressiveness to become powerful. Okoh's placement of Eriaye and Bharo in the same office helps to examine the feminine audibility and silence through the importance of acquiring education in the West African system. While Bharo sees no importance in acquiring education as a means of freedom, or as an avenue to become rich and an opportunity for travelling around the continent, Eriaye acknowledges the fact that education breaks a woman's silence, she becomes a force to be reckoned with whether the society likes it or not, and she uses her words and image to correct the society's perception of feminine intelligence. Bharo's words also expose the domesticity of a woman in the society:

BHARO: . . . Does a woman need a certificate to know how to keep a good home, comfort her husband and raise children? Our grandmothers never went to school, but they were successful women in their own way
.
.
.
God made man the head of the family. I know my place and I am glad to

occupy it. I only pray to come across a rich man to marry me. If when I tell him “Do this” he does it, “do that” and he does it, who am I to complain?

...

So, I too wouldn't mind to sit back and cross my legs in a chair to enjoy the fruits of my husband's labour. Who wouldn't like to be papered (sic) with affluence? (36)

These words sound true to a large extent and mirror Ellen's observation of two different lives of struggle and affluence. Every woman wants affluence, but not every woman wants to be silenced in the society. This is also noticeable in Eriaye's view; her other reason for education is to become rich and powerful in the society and not be regarded as a liability through any man's acquisition. Eriaye's strength to reject Mr Adudu's sexual advances show an inner power to change his belief that he can acquire any woman that comes his way.

ERIAYE: Sir, I am neither a pet nor a toy, but a person. A person with flesh and blood. A person with a soul searching for growth and fulfilment. I' can't let you tie me down with wealth. Besides, think of tomorrow. Think of when your athletic strength is dissipated, you can no longer hop from petal to petal, you limbs too like to rise and work. What kind of wife will I be then?

...

Who wants to be an irritable wife with unfulfilled desires? (43)

Eriaye rejects de Beauvoir's view of women as 'other' from the perspective of female reproductive capacities. While Okoh explore Eriaye's zeal through her intention to acquire more certificates to change the male view towards female's silence, Glover examines Rona's breaking away from domesticity by her constant

rejection of the societal perception of femininity. This is a bit different from Bharo and Tottie's characterisation who see their femininity in line with society's expectation. Bharo faces a situation of single parenting when Mr Adudu refuses to accept the pregnancy. She thinks of raising the child as a single mother, but she is constantly reminded by her colleagues of the danger involve in single parenting, especially in Nigeria whereby such a child has no national identity. Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) views such an exclusive circumstance as an attempt to protect patriarchal interests in the polygamous and flirtatious freedoms of the Nigerian male who wish to create an alternative family outside their wedlock (136). This is because a woman is not allowed to give the child citizenship which is also an issue explored in *The Mannequins* by the same playwright where Ebikere questions the authority of Edewede's over-protection of her child. Although the Nigerian 1979 constitution section 39 specifically states that no citizen will suffer discrimination merely by circumstances of his or her birth, ironically, the constitution is often disregarded and dismissed when it comes to female issues which are mainly as a result of the patriarchal system that hinders females to give their children citizenship.

Okoh and Glover display women as victims of exploitation, deception and persecution in the analysed plays which allow some of these female characters to feel anger, disgust and self-pity that are expressed in their language use. Although they speak in the plays, the weaker female characters' speeches depict their silence, their abandonment and their violation. The stronger female characters display some levels of maturity, vocalisation, power and determination. Although faced with different situations of male sexual appeal, Bharo's traumatising is similar to that of Tottie in *Bondagers*. Tottie feels after Kello defiles her, that she automatically becomes the

suitable wife for him, but Kello only uses her as a means of satisfying his sexual pleasure. The writers make the two men involved in the lives of Bharo and Tottie cause their own downfall which breaks the dichotomous relationship between the two genders. While Kello falls and dies, Mr Adudu is imprisoned for committing social offences. He sleeps with his own thirteen years old bastard unknowingly due to his promiscuity, embezzles the money he ought to use to make water available for Everytown people, and the females in the office are encouraged by the males in the office to voice out their problems in a riot against his harassment.

Although Bharo confronts the issue of choice at that point in the play whereby she has to decide whether to give her unborn child citizenship by fighting him to accept her pregnancy or remain with him as a secret lover, she decides to stay with others who are ready and willing to fight for their rights. Bharo's association with others signifies her interest in motherhood rather than in accepting the lover's plea to abort the pregnancy which is almost the same choice that confronts Agnes and Rona in *The Seal Wife*. While Agnes chooses to stay with Alec after her husband's departure, Rona is not ready to comply with the situation and sacrifice her 'self' for any husband or child.

Oseme is a silent, important young female character in Okoh's *Edewede* who raises issue of ritual without cutting in the play. Ignorantly, she provides a valuable solution from the beginning of the play in her discussion with her grandmother to stop the argument between her Ebikere and Edewede, which at the end of the play tends to be what the society accepts. Ironically, as a young girl who wants to enjoy the camping period of the initiation process, she wants the practice to continue, but she is not ready to go through the excision process which her mother fights against because of

the pain and trauma involved in it. Oseme intends to be a good female with good feminine cultural attributes, but she views the process of excision as a cause of death among innocents which she experienced during the loss of her only sister. She is a girl with womanish attributes. Her role in the play seems to be ignored even by the playwright, because of her constant disappearance. In summoning all her young mates together, she encourages them to reject the 'other' position from a tender age by refusing to go the initiation camp without their mother coming back to the village, which evokes a positive conclusion by the king and the men in the village. Okoh's characterisation of Oseme portrays her as very inquisitive young girl who uses her own voice to question certain traditions, encourage other girls not to go to the initiation despite all cajoling from her grandmother who wants her to go through the barbaric tradition.

Both writers explore motherhood as a means through which women are recognised and esteemed, they also use the patriarchal structure in their plays to transform their timid, shy, immature women into fully grown, mentally developed and sexually intelligent women who are confident enough to question the authority of men. Despite the niche created for these women in the plays, they are still limited in their autonomy and choice which has to be approved by the men before the women can forge ahead. This mirrors Purna Sen's observation in *The Trouble and Strife Reader* (2010) that women all over the world experience male violence as they talk about the devastating impacts of the belittling, of physical injuries and emotional destruction, of fearing for the safety of their children, of shame and embarrassment of speaking to anyone about their experiences and the fear that violence brings with it. This hinders

them as they experience the psychological and emotional torture that creates dented identity for them.

Also in the analysed plays, the writers mirror Wallace's (2000) view of womanist theory whereby she sees personal expressiveness as a highly valued characteristic of womanist epistemological frameworks. Although most elements of Walker's theory are often directed at black women and other women of colour who want to retrieve their race in history, the analysis of Glover and Okoh identify womanist frameworks of "women's culture', women's emotional flexibility . . . and women's strength" (xi) in the plays. The analysed female characters tend to be subject to male character's approval except for Glover's Rona who break away from all forms of silence. This approval is seen in *Bondagers* where the men are physically absent on stage or in the dramatization which affects the stories of the six bondagers revolving round the men involved in their lives. This reveals another form of female dependence on the male characters which is seen as subjugation and lack of power in female expression. This concept of the lack of power in female expression will be analysed further in through the works of Marcella Evaristi and Efua T. Sutherland.

CHAPTER FIVE

LACK OF DYNAMISM IN SELF-EXPRESSION AND CHOICE OF PSYCHE:
THE STUDY OF MARCELLA EVARISTI'S *COMMEDIA* (1983) AND
MOUTHPIECES (1980) AND EFUA T. SUTHERLAND'S *EDUFA* (1987) AND
THE MARRIAGE OF ANANSEWA (1987).

MARCELLA EVARISTI

Marcella Evaristi is a Scottish playwright, actor and screenwriter born in 1953 at Glasgow into a Scottish-Italian background. She attended Notre Dame High School for Girls and the University of Glasgow. Evaristi produced eleven plays for stage and five for radio between 1976 and 1992. Her first play was a monologue *Dorothy and the Bitch* (1976). Most of her writings draw on personal experiences and often contains witty observations on life from a feminist perspective. Such works are also concerned with contemporary issues which focus on personal psychology. Her other works include *Mouthpieces* (1980), *Beach of the Peace* (1982), *Commedia* (1982), *Cry Wolf* (1983), *The Offski Variations* (1994).

Synopsis of Marcella Evaristi's plays

Commedia

Evaristi presents a middle-aged Glaswegian-Italian widow, Elena, with her family members. Elena's two sons, Cesare, is the elder son is successful entrepreneur married to Gianna. The second son, Stefano, is a failed actor married to Lucy a young American photographer. Elena goes into a relationship with a young Balognan teacher, Davide, which is disapproved by members of her family except Lucy. Elena's sons ability to disapprove their mother's relationship shows the strength of the male gender right from childhood in the patriarchal culturally imbibed society. The play explores the issues of women sexuality, motherhood and the misconceptions about gender and national identities.

Mouthpieces

This is a full length play written in form of a revue. It is based mostly on improvisations which Evaristi uses as a way of exploring female identity through language use. The play creates an avenue to see the relationship between language and power depicted in her use of English and Scottish voices. The playwright's also shows how cultural imperatives of patriarchal ideology pressurises not only the women but men as well in the characters of Adam and

Douglas. This is a play delivered in prose and different styles of songs that reveal self-confessions of the characters. Evaristi's uses the character of Siobhan to expose a woman's loneliness, neglect and her inability to use language as a means of expressing oneself without being taken for granted.

EFUA T. SUTHERLAND

Efua Theodora Sutherland was born in Cape Coast, Ghana in 1924 and dies in Accra in 1996. She was educated in Ghana by Yorkshire nuns who introduced her to literature and the performing arts. She had her higher education at Homerton College, Cambridge University and at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London. She is a playwright, children's author and dramatist who experimented with storytelling and other indigenous Ghanaian traditions. Her renowned works include **Forinwa** (1962), **Edufa** (1967), *The Marriage of Anansewa* (1975). She founded the Ghana Drama Studio, The Ghana Society of Writers, The Ghana Experimental Theatre.

Synopsis of Efua T. Sutherland's Plays

Edufa

Edufa is a man of high social status, reputation and prestige who in his quest to maintain and improve this, consults a diviner who saw death hanging over him instead. As the only means of averting this disastrous situation, he must sacrifice something with the power of speech who can swear an oath to die on his behalf. In this work, Sutherland questions the vulnerability of a man in his quest to maintain his societal position and his loss of a dear one in order to maintain this status. Edufa makes his wife, Ampoma, to take this oath before revealing what it means to her.

The Marriage of Anansewa

Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa* as a storytelling drama exposes the character of a hypocrite father, Ananse, who denies his daughter, Anansewa, the freedom to choose her own husband. Based on the Akan spider tales (Anansesem), Sutherland translates the story into a new dramatic structure that she calls Anansegoro. Traditionally, in the Ghanaian setting, Ananse means trickster, the spider that often appears as a man. Through his cunning actions and greed, he sends Anansewa's pictures to four different chiefs to take her as a wife who immediately show their interests in taking his daughter as a wife. This becomes a puzzle he has to solve and with the help of Christie and Anansewa, he is able to get a solution and find Anansewa a husband whom he believes will take care of her.

Introduction

While chapter four explores verbal and written discourse as tools for silencing women, this chapter goes further to explore how the male gender are victims of language as well. In situations where gender, culture and language are sculpted through interactions and ongoing social activities, the dichotomy of the private and public sphere is being created in many ways. This is due to the fact that gender as a socio-cultural construct allows the females to be at the mercy of their language in relation to hierarchy which denies them self-expression. As a way of re-evaluating females true self-expression, Tuzyline Jita Allan observes in *Womanist and Feminist Aesthetics: A Comparative Review* (1995) that Alice Walker's major themes of womanist epistemology- audacity, woman-centeredness and whole(some)ness of vision is understood as critical imperatives in the effort to fashion a framework of feminist resistance to patriarchy (6). Walker's theory reflects the neglected cultural values through which language exposes the devaluation of femininity and femaleness in a patriarchal system that objectifies the female gender.

Julia T. Wood reiterates this in *Gendered Lives: Communication, Gender and Culture* (1995) -women are often trivialized by language. They are frequently demeaned by terms that label them as immature or juvenile (111). Walker and Wood identify that language allows a sense of self-reflection which helps the female gender to think of her gendered identity. While Walker sees language from the womanist view, Wood explores language from the feminist perspective that makes both critics see language as a process. Thus, Walker places womanism and feminism in a binary form which allows womanist theory to analyse how language encompasses all

categories of the female gender's feelings irrespective of their social status, class or race, to allow a sense of belonging and will of action.

Walker's womanism celebrates womanish gall, that is, the courage to be in the face of conspiracy and conformity and be able to make decision that build ones pride as a woman. However, most women with womanish gall end up being victims of patriarchal culture as they try to make certain changes; this is evidenced in the works of Sutherland and Evaristi whereby most of their female characters take the position that render them inexpressive and psychically battered within the oppressive society due to lack of self-understanding. Walker's womanist theory recognises self-understanding and self-definition as being crucial components of self-expression that involves public expression, aspiration to liberty, life satisfaction and the drive to expend energy.

Sutherland and Evaristi's works expose them as writers who believe that thoughts, feelings and emotions are inner attributes that female characters possess and the need to be expressed. Ironically, these expressions are devalued by the male characters within the patriarchal system that denies their language the necessary participation of esteemed speakers in their own speech communities. While Sutherland and Evaristi present language as forms of expression whereby feelings, thoughts and emotions are interlinked, they elaborate some of the reasons the female characters are objectified by the male characters who are also at the mercy of their own language and the patriarchal system in operation. The writers do not only expose how the male dominated societies influence female decision and their sexual attributes via

language as a way of enslaving them, they also reveal how men become victims of the language of power.

For example, the once self-proclaimed feminist, Marcella Evaristi works with the notion of sexism in language in *Commedia* (1983) and *Mouthpieces* (1980), protesting against any form of gender prejudice that she observes in the everyday life. Horvat observes in *Cats on the Cold Tin Roof* (1999) that:

Evaristi does not wish to write plays geared only to a feminist audience, her intention is to make her writing appealing to a larger audience through being both entertaining and thought-provoking, but without being didactic. In her opinion, the 'marriage of (. . .) the poetic and the dramatic and humorous is an ideal combination in playwriting (183).

Evaristi's use of poetic and dramatic language exposes language as a tool of constant power struggle which allows her to see the position of both genders in the communication hierarchy. Being influenced by the linguistic and cultural richness of Glasgow, Evaristi endeavours to explore the expression of female identity through language and the reinterpretation of gender roles in *Commedia* and *Mouthpieces*. Though the plays precipitate upon feminist viewpoint, both grows beyond the limitations of feminist thought to offer a tragicomic view of confused identity and delusions upon which people, and not only women build their lives and their sense of selves.

As a female playwright, Evaristi's *Commedia* confronts the stereotype that sees a woman as a mother figure who is initially controlled by the husband and later on by her male children. The play explores the themes of women's sexuality and motherhood and how these themes are viewed in the Italian-Glaswegian society. It is

a play that concentrates on showing the ways in which Evaristi uses language to explore and reinterpret female identity in relation to their gender roles. She places identity as being central to the view of the female gender in society which denies female characters a sense of 'self', self-expression through social stigmatization and unacceptability. This is why the mother figure, Elena's behaviour is rejected and condemned by her sons, who see her widowhood sexual expression as socially degrading.

Correspondingly, Sutherland's portrayal of Kweku Ananse in relation to her beautiful daughter, Anansewa, who is a Western-educated urban woman, is presented as the most valuable asset which the trickster has and if he succeeds in persuading one of the country's chiefs to marry her, he believes he is going to be wealthy. The playwright exposes Ananse as a cunning and dishonest father who sees the female gender as a source of wealth similar to other plays analysed in this study. As a trickster who can take different forms, Sutherland makes him an old man; Ananse tests the faithfulness of these four suitors before he can allow any of them to marry his daughter. Ananse plays on the intelligence and hopes of these four suitors from different clans when he tries to gain money by demanding an outrageous bride price. Following the oral technique, Sutherland uses a storyteller who stands outside the action and mediates between the actors and the audiences while the actors; the audiences also participate in singing or recounting *mboguo*, musical performances that comment on the story. This traditional story-telling form helps to create an expansive mood with the full involvement of the audience in the action of the play which engages the women in redressing their own issues from a new perspective through a language they can actively relate with.

Meanwhile, Evaristi's *Mouthpieces* explores the ways in which language is used to identify a woman's position in the contemporary society and the different ways in which woman and men view their identities and sexualities. In the portrayals of Adam and Douglas', the societal perception of what constitutes words imbued with feminine attributes sees these words as sympathetic, emotional and empathetic at the beginning of their conversation. Later on these attributes turn into the competitive male language structure which allows some form of domination in hierarchical situations. The misconception and disagreement between these two characters are encouraged by the fact that they cannot see each other. Adam and Douglas' later part of conversation reveals lack of compatibility and emotional feelings for one another, which is initially visible to the reader as they insult their national identity and sexuality. Rather than engage themselves in a self-expressive act, both male characters engage merely in the discussion as an everyday routine which does not allow the significance of being able to say what they want to say.

Likewise in *Edufa* (1987) such a lack of feelings and sympathy make Edufa sacrifice love and lives in order to align with society's expectations. Edufa's father, Kankam, reveals the hidden mystery behind his wife, Ampoma's ill-health:

KANKAM: You had willed that some old wheezer like me should be the victim. And I was the first to speak. 'Not me, my son', said I joking. 'Die your own death. I have mine to die.' And we all laughed. Do you remember? My age was protecting me. [Pause] Then Ampoma spoke. [Pause] Yes, I see you wince the fatal words that day and condemned her life. 'I will die for you Edufa', she said; and meant it too, poor, doting woman (17).

While expressing a sense of true self-expression, Ampoma's doting nature makes her the victim of her husband's weakness. She possesses the attributes of the feminine woman, the love and affection a woman is expected to have for her husband and children both in actions and words which is rejected by Rona in the previous chapter. In her discussion with Edufa, she identifies how the love towards him makes her a victim of premature death that will prevent her from nurturing her children whom she feels she has greater love for:

AMPOMA: I could not live where you are not. I could not live without you,
my husband

...

Over me, the sun is getting dark. [With great agitation] My husband! Watch the death that you should have died. [She frets from place to place as if escaping from him.] Stay over there in the sun. Children! My children! If I could cross this water I would pluck you back from the mountain side.

Children! Hold my hand! (10-11)

Ampoma's character reveals how a woman's feelings are often taken for granted, regarded as useless, expressionless and trivial which describes Robin Lakoff's idea in *Language and Woman's Place* (1975) that woman's language is seen as tentative, powerless and trivial. Sutherland presents Ampoma's language as a representation of women's vulnerability, powerlessness, and self-expressionlessness in a male-dominated society that silences woman's emotional communication. This corresponds with Messner (2001) and Wood's (2001b) opinions that the qualities men are expected to have such as aggressiveness, dominance, sexuality and strength

are identical to those linked with women's subjugation and abuse. This mirrors what constitutes Ampoma's feelings and language where femininity is used as a measurement of her subordination which lies in women's negative relation to language. As a woman, she expresses herself in emotional and sensitive terms as opposed to men.

Metaphorically, through the cultural feminine qualities (beauty, sexiness, powerlessness and passivity) and characterisation of Ampoma, the playwright's use of language serves as a form of empowerment which enables her to confront certain feminine cultural limitations and to question the masculine authority, thereby challenging the socio-cultural values. This is encouraged by Sutherland's use of sexist language to question and to expose the values that dictate the relationships among gender, culture and communication in the feelings, experiences, and complexities of the females within the society. For example, Ampoma use of language reveals her humiliation and sacrifice as a result of the love she has for her husband which systematically shows women are moving away from the marginal position and disregarding the pillars of patriarchy.

Language as a process is presented in *Mouthpieces* where Siobhan's character experiences a similar situation to Ampoma's. As mentioned earlier, Evaristi's shows Siobhan's monologue as woman's loneliness, neglect and the inability to use language as a means of expressing herself without being mocked in the society. Siobhan character is in service of an exploration of father-daughter relationship, during her rehearsed phone call to a father whom she has not spoken with for a long time. Her language is portrayed as vulnerable, powerless and expressionless in a

male-dominated society that silences emotional communication. Even in her rehearsal, she feels linguistically detached from her father who refuses to take her seriously from a tender age which she has always hope will change but still remains the same. She expresses her view about how she had loved to call her daddy a 'father' (1), but the fear of being mocked prevents her from doing so which reveals the inability of emotional expression. According to Siobhan, it's a name she cherishes and keeps as a secret till the time she is seen rehearsing it before she tells her father. She reassures herself that the father is not laughing while revealing her long aged secret of how she feels and how she had wanted to behave when she was younger:

SIOBHAN. . . . How important. I tried

but I was scared it would sound soppy and sentimental, you know? I think maybe it's something to do with Scotland. They don't exactly kiss or tell or hug, do they? Well we don't. we never did. It's like the place was wearing a big balaclava with no space for the face. You know? You do know?

Don't think I am blaming you or anything. I'm a chip off the old blockage too. Maybe it's just easier across the sea and over the phone. Anyhow . . .

here goes . . . I love you, father. Hello? Hello? Yes, operator is that my call through now? Thanks.

Hello. Hi Dad. Listen before you say something or I say something else . . .

thanks for the toys . . . the kids loved them . . . (1).

At this point, it becomes obvious that Siobhan has been rehearsing the conversation with her father that reveals a sense of male dominance in their interaction. This

reiterates Stanley (1977), Wood (1995), Cameron (2008) that women and what is feminine is diminished by language. Despite the fact that Siobhan is married with children, Evaristi makes the readers assume that her father still takes her to be immature from the speech which she practises. Instead of Siobhan mirroring Wood's (1995) assertion that when one realises how profoundly language influences perceptions of men and women, masculinity and femininity, one becomes empowered, she becomes self-expressionless as she discovers her individual and gender identity is constituted by language.

The performance text shows a father-daughter relationship as the gauge against which the daughter measures everything she does, making her feel immature and also objectified. Whether or not her father actually sees her as such remains unclear as his voice is never heard. Evaristi offers individual truths without always claiming that they are necessarily universal although there is a niggling sense that there is more to it than meets the eye. Siobhan's opinion that when she gets married that her father's perception will change in the way he treats and sees her proves abortive as she longs to be heard, to be taken seriously as an adult and be treated with respect.

The father-daughter relationship described in *Mouthpieces* reveals how generations of social conditioning and expectations have resulted in self-subjugation of womanhood that allows a woman to be vulnerable at all stages of her life, have low self-esteem, engage in subordinate roles and treated with contempt. Such vulnerability creates psychological turmoil that no matter how hard a woman tries to convince the society that she is capable of expressing herself through actions and words; the woman is hardly given the voice. This is one of the reasons Walker calls

for the womanish mind in order to stop issues concerning self-subjugation, fear, self-hate and guilt. Walker believes this will see the experiences of women as a series of movement from the social victimised beings to the growing, developing woman whose consciousness enables her to have autonomy over her life. This father-daughter relation allows the readers to re-examine and re-interpret the masculine imaginary worth that reduces women to silence which reveals the long history placed on women in the same sexual, social and cultural situation.

In this view of unvalued emotional capability, these female characters' situations are observed by Jessica Benjamin in *The Bonds of Love: Rational Violence and Erotic Domination* (1980) as lack of independence that limits their desire. Her opinion sees that women desires are often dictated by the desire of 'phallus' in the society. Ananse, Siobhan's father, Stefano, Cesera and Edufa objectify women in their lives to suit their needs. The phallus remains central in the plays as it embodies patriarchal socio-cultural laws.

In *The Marriage of Anansewa* (1987), this is the situation Anansewa encounters in the relationship with her father that disallows her from expressing personal desire but rather expresses herself through the desire of her father. Ananse as the phallus entity becomes the privileged half of the relationship he has with Anansewa at the expense of his daughter whose access to language becomes unconventional due to the cultural laws that identifies her gender identity as the less privileged. The father-daughter relationship that exists is different from what Evaristi's portrays in *Mouthpieces*. Despite Ananse and Anansewa having a good rapport, there is the socio-cultural perception about womanhood as an object and a source of family wealth that Ananse

explores in her daughter's femininity. This is evidenced at the beginning of Ananse's cunning act; Anansewa questions the masculine language that objectifies her in the letter she writes to the four different chiefs, but becomes subdued by the money received from one of the chiefs involved in Ananse's plot so her daughter can get the higher education she desires.

ANANSEWA: [Searching for the copy] Is it I? Here is the letter. [She reads . . .]

'the object of your interest'. Is that me, father? Am I the object? Oh, I wish, I wish . . . (21).

Sutherland explores how poverty makes women vulnerable to subjugation in the character of Anansewa whom despite her wishes becomes expressionless due to the incapability of paying for the affluent life she desires. Anansewa lacks Walker's womanish view which illustrates the incompetence of its application to all women as there are differences from one culture to another. Despite the universal appeal of Walker's womanist theory, Sutherland's view of her female characters show that not all black women are the same as they are diverse historically, culturally, politically, sexually and socially. Joyce A. Ladner confirms in *Racism and Tradition: Black Womanhood in Historical Perspective* (1985) that in discussing the black woman from a historical perspective, it is important to know that there is no monolithic concept of the black woman, but there are many models of black womanhood (271). As explored by Sutherland, the views of black women are many as it remains distinct that the fragmentation of Anansewa's identity is in relation to her sexist stance in the society as perpetuated by her father. For example, while Ananse calls his daughter 'the object of your interest' (21), showing women as mere objects to be owned and discarded any time the society feels like, he esteems the men involved in his plan to

make them honoured and respected. For example, instead of calling one of the chiefs by the name 'Chief of Sapa', he sees it as too ordinary for a man of high calibre due to his trick in order to find the highest bidder for his daughter, he asks Anansewa to type his letter starting with lots of respect and social recognition that:

ANANSE: . . . [He assumes the stance of an official praise-singer.]

'O Mighty- Tree-Of –Ancient-Origin!

Mighty-Tree-Of-Ancient-Origin,

Rooted in the shrine of deity!

Countless branches in which

Benighted wandering birds

Are welcome to shelter.' (14).

Ananse believes that men need their appellation in order to assume the social status that they should have. The above six lines appellation is used in place of the single line of 'Dear Chief of Sapa' which is a means of placing the masculine gender in a superior position as depicted by Sutherland. Although Sutherland uses Anansewa to question most of these masculine social attributes given, her poverty and language limits her actions. Anansewa ignorantly believes her father, but becomes sad and afraid that her father will not be able to unite the knot he is tying around them to secure a good husband for her and end his own poverty. Sutherland places Ananse in the position of a protective father, similar to Evaristi's portrayal of Stefano in *Commedia* who assumes the role of a father and son to his widowed mother. These two characters engage in the act of selfish negotiation, but the writers portray these in different ways. While Stefano negotiates with his mother's boyfriend to end his

relationship with her as it is socially unacceptable, Ananse engages in a talk that he feels will benefit his daughter in future.

The female protagonists seem to be perceived by their male counterparts as incapable of making their own choices, standing on their own and expressing their emotions in a society that makes them invisible but not absent. While the male characters make the female ones voiceless, they also make them the subject of these stories. Stefano adores his mother, but ironically does not respect her feelings for Davide which is the same way Ananse sees his daughter as a treasure and at the same time the object of a man's interest. This same object of interest makes the chiefs who are highly respected in their different communities ignore their ego in order to have Anansewa because she is considered as an additional asset for them. Sutherland gives the four chiefs/suitors names that reveal their social status and how much they are respected at the expense of the female gender who see themselves as not possessing a self. Helen Charles identifies the issue of non-self in *The Language of Womanism: Rethinking Difference* (1997) that:

Being defined in terms of the non-self never remains a static position. For the condition of being unterm'd triggers a response among those who are deemed to have no power, a demand to be recognised by those in power; a demand to foster positive self-recognition in (and outside) the sphere of black feminism (14).

Charles identifies most black women's predicament and their zeal to break away from their oppressed situations and become recognised identities not only within the feminist discourse but also in their different societies. Not only does a black woman see her sex as a form of oppression, she also sees that she belongs to a different socio-economic and historio-political group which hinders her from expressing her

view. These women believe that a change of class, view and belief will create new identities for them as they endeavour to engage in the public sphere. As at the time *The Marriage of Anansewa* was written, some West African males especially those ones that worked with the colonial masters have started to believe that education is a means of liberating women from the boundaries set by socio-cultural injustice against them.

This corresponds with Walker's (1984) and Wood's (1995) observations that schools are powerful agents of socialization where one is taught about the culture's history, traditions, practices, beliefs, and values. Some other literates amongst the West Africans also believe that education limits the type and category of suitors that wants such a woman's hand in marriage because she is respected, knowledgeable and intelligent which makes men see her as being sophisticated, competent, valuable and smart. This shows that education is another form of socialization or agent that reconstructs people's identity either as an individual or in relation to the society. Whether true or not, education redresses Anansewa's identity that makes the four chiefs want her for a wife which mirrors the first messenger's speech in the play when Anansewa pretends to be dead in order to untie his father's knot and to know the chief that truly loves her amongst the four:

FIRST MESSENGER: Respected lady, and you, elder of the family, whom
we meet there . . . Our royal one, the wealthy paramount Chief of the
Mines whose praise name is 'You Are Coming Again, Aren't You',
has had many discussions with his councillors about ths (sic) marriage
he was going to contract. He insisted-against their advice-that if a lady

of this quality came into his hands she would give enlightened training to the many children to whom his wives have given birth to (78).

The first messenger's lines reveal the nature and nurture attributes associated with the female gender which allows the Chief of the Mines to see Anansewa from two different perspectives of both domestic (private) and academic (public) sphere. The chief does not only see Anansewa as a woman whose education will positively influence his kingdom, but also sees the marriage as a way of maintaining his social prestige amongst his people who will see his new wife as an additional advantage to his kingdom. It is this obsession in maintaining social status that makes him neglect his council's advice not to marry Anansewa.

Although Sutherland portrays women's value in a derogatory manner in relation with these chiefs, she also exposes how the female gender can be expressive through her biological and intellectual worth in the patriarchal society. Being educated and beautiful, Anansewa is the subject of discourse from the beginning of the play to the end; the male characters see her as the subject of their story which acknowledges the self-worth of the female gender to be appreciated the more. This allows the female protagonist not only to be seen in relation to the men but also in what she is able to achieve as an individual, especially in West African societies that attribute more value to the educated women.

In *Mouthpieces*, Evaristi portrays Higgles's view of language in a derogatory manner; he sees the language as an avenue to incorporate the female gender into the public accepted domain. At first, Higgles talks about the proper language which he associates with the upper-class English language and also views from the male

perspective that signifies his inability to accept the female language. Furthermore, Higgles claim that his youth voice is ‘a thing of the past’ (3), can be analysed from two different positions through his lines. Firstly, this can actually be the socially inferior accent which he speaks before learning the upper-class English language that places him in a superior position than the other people. Secondly, exploring his later analysis of the females and their language in the room, the reader establishes Higgles’ view of his youth voice becoming a thing of the past. His rejection of certain vocabulary exposes the semantic undercurrents:

HIGGLES. . . Yes, I promised myself that my destiny would not be wrecked by my regional emissions. Yes, I promised myself that the voice of my youth was a thing of the past. Later we’ll get onto vocabulary. I’ll bash the dollies and the serviettes and the settees and the cardies and the pinkies and the Babychams out of you. Whatever they are. But that’s Advanced. Truly, what I did for myself that day in the lav, I can do for you. Money back if disappointed.

Reduced rates for women. Trust me. Don’t be put off by my suave manner. Trust me. Don’t feel diminished. I should hate that. I have foibles. I do bad-tempered things with carpet slippers, Mrs Pearse and impressionable tarts. There. You’re like babies. You’re getting younger as I look at you. Relax. (3-4).

Higgles’ use of the words such as the ‘dollies, the serviettes, the settees, the cardies, the pinkies, the Babychams’ exposes his rejection of the woman’s language which he sees as inferior to the language which he wants his potential students to learn. He

also compares this women's language to a form of accent belonging to the domestic sphere which he totally disapproves by assuring his potential students he will teach them the advanced form of language (the male form of language) and promises to refund the money if they are not satisfied. He emphasises the reduced rates for women since he feels women are expected to be deficient in mastering this 'advanced' form of vocabulary he intends to teach. Higgles mocks a potential female student, Betty who speaks with a working class Scottish accent:

HIGGLES. You're scum, you'll never be better than you are, you're scruff,
Whatever that is, the gutter's not good enough, you want thick boots to kick
you and fat lips to kiss you with, you'd squirm with proletarian pleasure,
wouldn't you? You're debased, I should simply face it. The Queen's English
coming out of your blousy mouth would be like leeches making silk (22).

Apart from Higgles's mockery of Betty's Scots accent, there is the general assumption in the above lines that exposes that women hardly have the time and energy to learn the core requirements of the public sphere due to the fact that women's time has been spent attending to the needs of others, less intelligent and domesticated. For women who have dared or daring to have the time and energy to venture into the public sphere, they face the tendency of being silenced as Betty is experiencing with Higgles in *Mouthpieces*. This issue of women's silence is recognised by Deborah Cameron in *The Feminist Critique of Language: A Reader* (1990) that:

If women's utterance is not forbidden, it is often ignored; and if not ignored, then received with howls of execration. It is the fear of censure

which leads to self- censorship, a phenomenon amply attested in the history of women's writing (6).

Cameron identifies how sexist language limits women's ability in a community where she is disregarded and censored. As Evaristi examines, the sexist language through Higgles' treatment of Betty is seen as an avenue to establish silence and the sense of social inequality which exists between the female and male gender. The play shows a descriptive discussion between the two characters to allow the opportunity of seeing the gender differences used by Higgles to divide the world into the masculine and the feminine spheres. The dichotomy therefore stresses the ancient strategy of the male gender as the oppressor while the female gender is at the receiving end of this unfair treatment. Higgles lines, 'The Queen's English coming out from your blousy mouth would be like leeches making silk' (12) emphasises the features associated with the female gender in relation to her language.

These features include the body, sexuality, passivity, passion and irrationality of the female gender that corresponds with Lakoff's (1975) observation of the difference between a man and a woman's language. She identifies that girls are encouraged to be docile, well-mannered and passive that allows them to use more evasive language, empty adjectives, polite forms, tags indirect requests amongst others, while the men are identified with rationality, knowledge and expression. Evaristi uses the societal view of female association with irrationality as a way of analysing a crucial aspect of the female gender that encourages Betty to learn more vocabulary and improve her use of English as a way of revealing women as beings who are knowledgeable enough to participate in rational discourse that the men take as their identity. In line with female passiveness, Evaristi's display of Higgles character mirrors Cameron's

(1990) observation that the idea of women as passive sexual objects is to be found expressed linguistically in various ways. One of the most obvious places where it is pervasive is the lexicon (vocabulary) (15).

Cameron's view reflects and reinforces Higgles sexist language in perception of gender that creates the mental picture of the vocabulary in his mind. This also reveals a way of denying the female voice in an attempt to make oneself present in history and to be an active author of one's own world. As Spender (1980) notices that not only do women contradict the image and the status which is allocated to them in the patriarchal order by such 'defiant' acts, they also become potential source of danger, for they are in a position to articulate a subversive doctrine, and to be heard (192). Evaristi presents Higgles fear of women learning the male language which tends to threaten the public spheres as Betty might become a disturbance to the patriarchal order while she tries to express her frustration about the world. Betty's treatment reiterates Walker's womanist view that seeks to expose the differences and similarities human beings experience in their different societies as a result of gender, skin colour, language, economic status, class, sexuality and personal experiences which are important to individual's social, political, cultural and historical understanding of selves in relation to others as well.

Sutherland in a similar way explores the idea of female passivity and denial in Edufa's obsession to maintain his position of privilege which makes him sacrifice his wife against loss of prestige. This is a situation Claude Steele proposes in *The Psychology of Self-Affirmation: Sustaining the Integrity of the Self* (1988) as self-affirmation theory that views the overall goal of self-system as a means to protect the

image of self-integrity, moral and adaptive adequacy. When this status of self-integrity is threatened like that of Edufa, people respond in a way to try all that is within their means to restore their self-worth which they believe improves their self-esteem.

As a way of maintaining male superiority, Edufa becomes engrossed in his self-esteem and tries to protect it in order to have a valued identity, but at the end of the play the playwright uses his love for societal status to make him vulnerable to situations that he is unable to cope with in a culture that respects male affirmation. Edufa's character not only reveals the story of greed, but that of men's vulnerability. In a situation where a man's wealth and status surpasses all other things to him, Sutherland sees that the male gender also becomes unprotected in their search for social recognition. *Edufa* however, is a play filled with so many ironies that attributes some of the assumed feminine qualities like indecision, irrationality, tenderness, to the male gender. Despite what Edufa does to his wife, he still confesses love and shyness which are part feminine attributes in order to cajole his wife and make people believe in his affection and love towards her. In his discussion with his friend Senchi about the bouquet of flowers which he asks his sister to take to Ampoma, he confesses:

EDUFA: [To Abena] Little one, you who is about to marry, I'm giving you a chance to look at love. Take these flowers in to Ampoma. [He speaks emotionally into the flowers.] Tell her that I, her husband, send them; that it is she who has so matured my love. I would have presented them myself, but I have learned the magic of shyness, and haven't the boldness

to look into her eyes yet. (40).

Edufa's lines are romantic and captivating after his evil deeds to his wife which makes his friend, Senchi, think he is the lovable husband he used to think he is not. Senchi at the beginning of their conversation accuses him of not being romantic enough, but at the end of the lines, he agrees that it is Edufa's first graceful act he had ever seen. While the men drive the actions of the play, it also reveals Ampoma's expression of pain or angst. The song Senchi renders at this point is a praise of womanhood which Sutherland uses to celebrate the female gender's boldness at some point in their life.

SENCHI: Nne

NneNne

Nne

NneNne

O, Mother

Nne

NneNne

If I find you

Nne

NneNne

I'll have to worship you

Nne

NneNne

I must adore you

Nne

NneNne

O, Mother

NneNne

She's wonderful

She's wonderful

O, Mother

She's wonderful . . . (40-41)

Sutherland uses Senchi's emotional song to re-analyse the value of motherhood which makes Seguwa sob quietly and Edufa to feel the pain of what he has done to an innocent domesticated and cultural woman who loves him wholeheartedly. When the Chorus finally arrives at the party organised by Edufa to appreciate his wife after his evil deed, Senchi's conversation with them reveals the societal view of women not saying 'No' even if they are not having pleasant experiences. This is also similar to Evaristi's reference to the book 'How to Say No Without Guilt' or 'Yes Without Guilt' that allows positive thinking and succeeding in whatever a woman chooses to do, in *Commedia*.

Elena's experience in *Commedia* re-affirms Senchi's confirmation of what the society expects of a woman. Despite the fact that Elena wants to stay with Davide,

she is unable to make the decision to follow her heart because she does not want to disagree with the societal view of womanhood and widowhood which is what leads to Sofola's Ogwoma's death in *Wedlock of the God* being analysed in the next chapter. Instead of Elena rejecting the hypocrisy of her sons, she put up with it to become the victim of an unvalued emotional capability and help to maintain masculine superiority. Stefano seems to perpetuate an image of female beauty from male perspective, as Elena is judged by cultural imperatives made by men to convey their positions of power within the society. At the point when Stefano goes to take Elena home angrily from Davide's flat, his attitude exposes his adulterated culture, his lack of feelings and injustice against the female characters, in this conversation:

STEFANO: But that's not your world. Your world wouldn't let you get away with it. They'd break you down, my darling. And you're not strong, admit it---

ELENA: Oh, I admit it.

STEFANO: You're delicate. There is a quarter of a century between you. Look, if the cosseted movies stars with uplifts in their tits don't get away with it, how do you think you'll make out? I'm being cruel to be kind. Face it. Accept. Before the sneers and the gossip get under way. These days even Bardot's making a fool of herself. (29)

Evaristi portrays Elena as being subservient to the culture that disallows her from self- definition. Stefano's view is clear about the social indifference towards her mother's choice of partner which is against the societal norm. The society in which they are does not allow a woman to choose or marry any male who is younger, which is the excuse Stefano uses to disregard her mother's reaction towards loneliness.

Although the society allows a man to marry a younger woman (in Stefano's case there is eight years age difference between him and his wife) Evaristi places the same society as dictating Elena's future against her own personal emotional desire. Elena's situation is what Jessica Benjamin describes in *The Bonds of Love: Rational Violence and Erotic Domination* (1988) as lack of female independence that limits their desire. Benjamin description sees that women's desires are often dictated by the desire of 'phallus' in the society. As far as her son, Stefano is concerned, Elena is not suppose to go into such an antisocial affair because such a relationship is not meant for a woman of her age and calibre; so she should be curbed as soon as she can which elaborates his view of 'Bardot making a fool of herself'. While Evaristi uses the play to expose lack of female autonomy, she also probes into the male power that disallows a woman from taking control of her life and body.

Both Sutherland and Evaristi analyse the core idea of personal autonomy as an independent expression in order to become the subject of ones story. The two writers see it as a commitment that has to do with self-personal rules while remaining free from the control and interference of others. In Evaristi's view, such autonomous nature allows the person to act in accordance with a freely self-chosen and informed plan, but Elena becomes enslaved in her own autonomy. To some extent, Evaristi presents to the audiences Elena's autonomy as a weakened autonomy which makes her incapable of deliberating or acting on the basis of her own volition, liberty, self-determination, independence and self-reliance, therefore objectifying herself. As her true nature becomes that of pretence, an unaccomplished dream and a reflection in the mirror, she is forced to align with the patriarchal order that makes her voiceless right from childhood to motherhood and widowhood.

While Stefano re-engages his mother in the model of a traditional mother figure, he also re-analyses the expectations of a widowed mother who does not go on holiday with a younger lover, smoke or speak her mind nor wear red. Evaristi uses red colour as a colour of love, passion and symbol of silence in Elena's situation. While Elena is unable to wear a red coloured dress given to her by her uncle in Chicago from her childhood, she fantasises how she longs to wear it publicly which she cannot do because of the misconception associated with the red colour and the female gender. This belief is re-addressed by Davide who ignorantly buys Elena a scarlet blouse. Evaristi uses red colour as a form of metaphor to depict the awakening of young girls' sexuality and their growth into adulthood. The young girls' social denial to use red colour is metaphorically analysed as the reconstructed woman's identity to suit the patriarchal system, while her true nature is seen as unacceptable and morally shameful which needs to be hidden:

DAVIDE: You see how intuitive I am. Years later and without me knowing
that story, I buy you a scarlet blouse and in a stroke, I redress the balance
of history. (*Grins*) I red-dress the balance of history (Act Two, Scene 1, P. 27).

Metaphorically, the red dress Davide bought for Elena is not only redressing history in her life, but it signifies that Elena needs to follow her instinct in order to make decisions that is best for her without the interference of any member of her family. While the Elena's society and family might have discouraged her from her autonomy from a young age, such autonomous denial is also emphasised in Sutherland's plays which allow woman's alienation from the public domain.

Anansewa is also denied this form of personal autonomy in Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa*. The lack of self-sufficiency and capability is used by her father to manipulate her and makes her readjust to the core expectation of the females in the male-dominated society. Ananse does the same to another female character, Christie, who is in love with him. He manipulates her to the extent of involving her in his puzzle to find a suitable husband for his daughter. Despite Christie's show of love and affection for Ananse, he fails to acknowledge it as it is considered an unaccepted display and unwomanly in Sutherland's context of the play. This mirrors Ananse's mother and sister seeing Christie as being too sophisticated and unfeminine in the manner she behaves, dresses and responds to issues. Sutherland employs Ananse's character to play on Christie's intelligence as an avenue to re-examine the plights of a woman seeking love and attention to fulfil part of the social expectations of the female role.

At first, Ananse does not see Christie as someone intelligent enough to solve his problem, but as one who is at his beck and call while he passively engages her in disentangling his puzzle amongst the four chiefs. Against Ananse's mother's view that sees Christie as a destroyer of culture and social norms in relation to womanhood, Christie becomes an active participant through which Ananse is able to resolve his puzzle. As the players and audience laugh at his sudden employment of Christie as part of the process to untie his knot, he recognises that both genders go through difficult times as they journey through life and thus it does not always matter what the society thinks of both genders:

ANANSE: . . . if you are merely human like me, you'd better make your

laughter brief, because in this world, there is nobody who is by-passed by trouble (61).

He acknowledges the instability and variability of gender identities that are prone to changes. Sutherland recognises that gender identities are performed through language as she portrays Ananse's character to become what he makes of himself through his cunning ways and not what the society expected of his gender. Although, the playwright reminds the reader of Ananse's intention to secure a future for his daughter which is also at her expense as earlier said, he also wants to align with the social construct of masculinity.

Through the language of the plays, Sutherland and Evaristi engage both conscious and unconscious processes in autonomy described by Walker's womanist theory as emotional capability expressed through the female characters' voices. In Walker's (1984) view, such emotional capability allows a woman to be bold, audacious, outspoken, brave and independent enough to express herself in the midst of masculine forces that dictates who and what she is or becomes. Such masculine forces are norms and principles that establish a woman's role as a mother, wife and daughter which the society accepts as the true nature of a woman. Elena tries to do away with the masculine perception of femininity in order to express herself by making a New Year resolution to regain her autonomy and to always speak out her mind even if the society does not accept such behaviours during her conversation with her daughter-in-laws, Lucy and Gianna:

ELENA: My New Year resolution is going to be this. I'm going to start speaking my mind much more, and I'm going to please myself much more. Not at

the expense of anyone's feelings and not so that I become a selfish person,

I wouldn't want to become cruel –

LUCY: Careful, you're apologising for the thought already (9).

The conversation amongst these three women reveals that despite the fact that Elena is making a conscious effort to assert herself, she is also making unconscious moves in pleading guilty even before committing any offence that will distort the social characteristics of the genders through her apologetic language. This apologetic language examines Elena's sense of liberty being controlled by her fear from childhood and by her sons' fear of change that will definitely challenge the socio-cultural values that they have always looked up to as the standard of a society. Despite Evaristi's display of Elena's sons control over her, she ridicules their exaggerated sense of traditional values by placing them besides their mother's boyfriend, Davide, the young Italian teacher who discloses and rejects their sense of socio-cultural acceptability, national understanding and identity:

DAVIDE: . . . What century are you people living in? Italy has moved on a bit, or haven't you noticed? I just wanted to tell you that, Steven before you tried to avenge your mother's honour. D'you ever look at this country you visit for one month and then mythologise for the rest of the year? You're like creatures from a time capsule! You're so busy looking to your own good name, that the world, Scotland, Italy, Milwaukee, progresses unnoticed (30).

While enrooting themselves on the Scottish soil, Stefano and Cesare are derooting themselves from their Italian origin. At first, Cesare changes his name from 'Caesar

to Cesare' (6) as a way of avoiding being mocked in Scotland and a means of survival in the Glasgow school. This is also evidenced in the binary mixture of Glaswegian and Italian language that all the characters except for Davide and Lucy use. Horvat (1999) states that these characters either speak with an Italian accent or mispronounce English words to make them sound Italian such as 'Mamma' instead of 'Mum', 'Italiani' instead of 'Italians', 'fish anachipsa' instead of 'fish and chips . . . (248). Evaristi creates these words to reveal the characters confused identities in relation to their beliefs and traditions which they try to uphold egoistically. This confused situation discloses what Walker's womanist theory sees as the eradication of sexism, classism and racism amongst human in order to allow wholesomeness which is a sense of emotional connection between 'self' and 'other' that rectifies the effect of long-term social division amongst different communities.

While Davide, Stefano and Cesare are of the same Italian tradition, there is a form of transculturalism as defined by Fernando Ortiz in *Transculturalismo* (1965) as a synthesis of two phases of culture occurring simultaneously, that is the product of meeting between an existing culture or subculture and a migrant culture which transforms the two and creates a neoculture during the process. Evaristi uses this process of transculturation against Elena's two sons who see their Italian culture as being static, supreme and monolithic.

From Sutherland's perspective, Edufa and Kamkam show a binary view of masculinity through their treatment of the Ampoma's character. While Ampoma displays emotional connection between self and other by ignorantly surrendering her own life in place of her husband's, she becomes powerless and subjugated to

androcentric desires. Having personally realised what she has done, she gives an open retaliation to her husband in order to expose his evil deeds in maintaining his masculine societal position. She presents her husband with waist beads which symbolise one of African features of female beauty; by engaging in this action, she attributes Edufa with the assumed female timidity that makes him want to hold on to his position while he refuses to die:

AMPOMA: [Inscrutable] Women, you understand, don't you, that with this, I mean to claim him mine. And you are witnesses. My husband, wear this in my honour. [*She surprises EDUFA by slipping the beads round his neck. His first reaction is of shock.*] With it, I declare to earth and sky and water, and all things with which we shall soon be one, that I am slave to your flesh and happy so to be. Wear it proudly, this symbol of the union of our flesh (52-53).

Although Ampoma's actions and the way she expresses herself seem alien to the people seated at the party, it also reveal the degree at which a woman's emotional capability can help her to reject the restrictions around her in the presence of what constitute the society. Her voice becomes audacious; she uses the standard language of power, but destroys herself in the process; which is caused by the deception on the part of her husband and part of her own acceptance of spousal loyalty. Since Ampoma is the subject of the male character's story, Sutherland describes the difference in language, voice and knowledge through Kankam who is old and knowledgeable enough to decipher his son's trick from the beginning of the play when he asks the question which Ampoma falls victim of. Aligning with the social

acceptability of both genders, Kankam's wisdom reaffirms that men are knowledgeable while women are often gullible to fall victim of their own words as revealed in the play:

EDUFA: Father, are you mad?

KANKAM: [*Shocked*] *Nyame* above! To say father and call me mad! My *Ntoro* within you shivers with the shock of it!

EDUFA: [*Aware that he has violated taboo*] You provoked me.

KANKAM: [*Moving away*] All right, stranger, I am mad! And madness is uncanny. Have you not noticed how many a time the mad seem to know things hidden from men in their right minds? [*Rounding up on EDUFA*] You know you killed your wife that day. I saw fear in your eyes when she spoke. I saw it, but I didn't understand. (17)

This signifies that Kankam is aware of Edufa's inhuman nature. Kankam reveals what happened in Edufa's bedroom the night he asks his wife to swear and take an oath innocently. He exposes how his son's fear makes him plead while Ampoma ignorantly swears away her life for love which affects Edufa's conscience before he could explain the danger of what Ampoma has done to her. Out of fear, Edufa shows his wife the charm and confesses to her its power to kill whosoever swears to die for him. After Ampoma makes herself the victim of her own words, she weeps bitterly and lives with the threat of dying at any moment. It also reveals Edufa as a coward and a disgrace to the male gender who is not ready to face the challenges of life as a man.

As opposed to Otto Jespersen's observation of men's linguistic capability in *The Woman* (1998 reprinted version) that men are slower and hesitant in their selection of words in order to know the appropriate or fittest noun or adjective to be used, Edufa becomes linguistically dissociated with this societal view of masculinity when he calls his father a mad man. Edufa's actions result in a strained relationship between his self and other members of the communication hierarchy. His behaviour corresponds with Evaristi's view of how the cultural imperatives of the patriarchal society coerce not only the women, but also the men as well. This is evidenced in *Mouthpieces* where Adam and Douglas who see language as a two-edged means of expression that either makes or mars human beings. Readers notice this in the early dialogue that turns abusive and the latter parts of the play:

ADAM & DOUGLAS. . . . So open your mouth and see

All the creatures words can be

Magical beasts with sharp stings

They will bite or caress

With each no and yes

You'll be cursed you'll be blessed

In the test of words.

Words . . . they've cheated me

cunningly defeated me.

They quarrelled with my quietness and won

But words can speak so sweetly

I surrender to them meekly

Remembering silence

Brought not much fun (25).

Evaristi exposes the fear of both characters that see language as a means through which a man is 'cheated' and 'defeated' without any form of consideration to the social prestige assigned to the masculine gender. Sutherland and Evaristi render the male characters to be powerless like the female characters that are at the mercy of their words and actions in the society which agrees with Simone de Beauvoir's belief in *The Second Sex* (1952) that one is not born, but rather becomes a woman. This view is supported by Judith Butler's argument in *The Judith Butler Reader* (2003) that sex construed as a biological category is as heavily socially constructed as gender, and that biological sex itself is a gendered category. Butler insists that while feminist analysis successfully identified the social practices that produce gender as a category of identification, they have failed to see that sex itself is produced as a category that precedes gender.

In line with Butler's view, the meanings attached to the female body as an object of scientific scrutiny are determined not just by the practices of science, but in conjunction with other cultural and economic formations, for example, global capitalism, the mass media, institutional racism, or homophobia. Gender however is seen as a means of investigating the variability and contingency of male and female understanding of sexual difference. However, becoming a woman or a man is not something one accomplishes once and for all in a lifetime, but it is an accumulation of what the society constitutes a particular person to be. Deborah Cameron notices in *Language and Gender: A Reader* (1998) that gender has constantly to be reaffirmed and publicly displayed by repeatedly performing particular acts in accordance with

the cultural norms (themselves historically and socially constructed, and consequently variable) which define ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ (271).

The performativity of gender allows an interesting discussion in the actuality of gendered speech which both writers treat in a way that switches the male characters language to the female characters way of life. This reflects Penelope Deutscher’s view about Luce Irigaray’s writings in *A Politics of Impossible Difference* (2002) that women have not been the other insofar as they have been represented as “not-men” (11). In this sense, Irigaray suggests women have served as negative mirrors sustaining masculine identity. While many socio-cultural and historio-political understandings of the masculine identity have dictated the representations of feminine identities, Evaristi’s portrayal of two symbolic characters in *Mouthpieces*, Pink and Lemon, shows that gender difference is visible even with the colour separation that allows the society to associate particular colours to differentiate gender as it also breeds discrimination between them. This is identified as the metaphor of female is to pink as male is to blue. Pink is often associated with sweetness, non-threatening, stereotypical girlishness while Blue is depicted with strength, ego and stereotypical boyish nature that reveals the gender differences and roles associated with each sex from an early age as dictated by the culture. Most of these cultural beliefs about gender often deprive women of the virility and the spirit to express themselves due to a historical, social and intellectual basis which is not always in favour of their gender. According to Evaristi's portrayal of Pink and Lemon, both characters agree that their mothers have been moulded by a stereotyped culture to always give them certain colours of clothes to wear and if these colours changes occasionally, they are aware of the abnormal changes. The attitude of these

two unknown mothers symbolise Irigaray's observation of gender in *Sexes and Genealogies* (1993c) as it stands for the unsubstitutable position of the *I* and the *you* (*le tu*) and of their modes of expression (170). While readers does not only see feminine as the colonised other of the masculine in Evaristi's portrayal of Pink and Lemon, they also see the feminine language as a traditionally adopted culture which has become the norm.

PINK. Hey, I'm sorry. Lemon? Och tell me. Honest, I'll shut up. Come on.
whit's the problem?

LEMON. Well, you see, I'd got used to the blue. I mean, of course white
sometimes, on the odd Sunday, memories of christening, but mostly blue.

PINK. I thought bein a blue baby was fatal.

LEMON. It's not bein blue that's fatal. I mean I haven't worked it out properly, I
mean I'm not quite sure whit it's aboot, but the blues and pinks mean something.
They do.

PINK. They mother carin do!

LEMON. Hey, do you know aboot it? Can ye tell me?

PINK. A don't know. I think that was female intuition. It wisnae very pleasant
either. Go on.

LEMON. Well, ma mammy's a good mammy, no?

PINK. Don't get distracted were all of us in love

LEMON. Right. Well she's always dressed me in blue. So ow always known whit
tae expect. You know?

PINK. Aye. No.

LEMON. Well . . . do you mind if I talk it through . . .

PINK. Whit?

LEMON. I mean when yir blue (and not white or lemon and therefore indeterminate) all that's great. "Nice big boy, big man, strong wee fella, tickle tackle, there whit a clever little man", poke tickle finger tae clutch. It's magic. But it depends on yir pastel. Only blue seems to do the trick tae make it magic. (5-6)

Any changes in the laid down socio-cultural colours is regarded as abnormal because it seen as a form of disruption that affects both genders. Evaristi presents a psychoanalysis view of the developmental stage in a young boy whose ego and confidence has been built from childhood to always see himself superior even though he is ignorant of why the society has made it so. Stevi Jackson criticises psychoanalysis theory in *The Desire for Freud: Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (2010) as bad news for anyone attempting to rear children away from being walking feminine or masculine stereotypes. She sees it as a theory that encourages masculine dominance and feminine vulnerability, a respectively narcissistic and masochistic nature. Creating a form of sexed identity at first, Lemon questions the association of colours with gender, but at the end of his conversation with Pink, he sees it as an additional advantage to his gender that provides the respect associated with the masculine gender in the society. The characters dialogues reveal Kaplan's (1990) view of two important and distinct stages at which a woman's apparently weaker position in language is set. She identifies that:

The first is the oedipal stage where the child, constructed as a speaking subject, must acknowledge social sex difference and align herself with

women and restricted speech- a distinction blurred by the restrictions on children's speech. The second stage, puberty, further distinguishes girls from boys by the appearance of adult sex difference and access to public discourse for men (64).

To explore a bit of Kaplan's view of gender segregation from childhood in this analysis, the oedipal phase creates a form of biological and cultural tension for the two genders especially the female whose lack of penis is related to lack of power. While Evaristi reflects this in Pink and Lemon's dialogues, it exposes the incapability of the female psyche to use everyday common language as she feels castrated due to lack of penis. Evaristi's textual presentation of both genders explore a means of self-disclosure of what each of them feels about their gender, but the female gender is characterised by intimacy and by great concern for others which are some of the attributes the society wants her to have. These early behavioural patterns, received in childhood, persist with some females to adulthood, and expose the female speech as an avenue of negotiating powerlessness and incapability which place them at the mercy of how their own words are perceived within the communication hierarchy.

The play however reveals that language is a mouthpiece through which one's identity is known and maintained in self and interaction with others. Language gives information about the individual in diverse ways and how a person is to be treated which Evaristi might have or might not considered while writing the play. Apart from this interpretation of mouthpiece in relation to her plays, Elspeth King in *The Scottish Women Suffrage Movement* (1978) explores the use of mouthpiece in the sixteenth century as a torturing device used to punish women accused of quarrelling, gossiping, and fleeing. She exposes that such women were chained in the public

with branks; a device consisting a metal frame for the head and a bit to restrain the tongues to punish and scold them. This keeps their mouth open and prevents them from speaking, which symbolically is a way to silence them in public.

Punishing a woman for gossiping is a way of interrupting the relationship and the form of communication link that exists amongst the women. This is a way of disrupting their sense of sisterhood and form of consciousness raising through which women may be able to express their individual experiences in a society that renders women's speech irrelevant. Deborah Jones in *Gossip: Notes on Women's Oral Culture* (1990) notices that gossip is essentially a talk between women which is a basic element of female subculture (244). Joan Rubin in *Bilingual Usage in Paraguay* (1972) also sees gossip as a 'language of intimacy' arising from the solidarity and identity of women as members of a social group with a pool of common experience (513). Gossip is always being derogated and taken as being trivial by men in the society, but it serves as a form of threat to these men who sees women's issues as trivial which is the reason behind most of the physical constraints placed on women when found gossiping. This is the same way Evaristi sees language as a means through which the female gender is punished and scolded when she tries to express herself in the male-dominated society.

Evaristi entitles her review *Mouthpieces*, which is a possible indication that all of the characters in the play are mere spokespersons of, or voices of dissent against, ingrained social attitudes. Ironically, historically, a mouthpiece was also an instrument of punishment for village scolds, those uncomfortable wives who were accused of speaking in the church on Sunday, spreading rumours or disagreeing with

their husbands. In this sense, it represented a piece of iron placed in the accused mouth before dipping her into the stream from the village bridge. The mouthpiece would prevent the accused from closing her mouth, breathing properly or talking, a physical muzzle that would remain on her face for the duration of the punishment. From a physical muzzle to a metaphorical one, in the scenes from Evaristi's review women often feel that their voices remain unheard. Similarly, Sutherland employs the confession of and search for love as the means through which an African woman is silenced. Bell Hook's *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* (1990) sees silence as the condition of one who has been dominated and made an object (20). Sutherland views Christie's dogmatic silence in *The Marriage of Anansewa* as a result of the unappreciated love she shows to the cunning Kweku Ananse who is only bothered about his well-being at the expense of the female characters. This reveals Christie as a dominated being like the other female characters discussed earlier. Christie's love for Ananse captures her reasoning to accept everything he says in order to have his attention and gain his interest even at the expense of Anansewa whom she ought to prevent from going into such an organised marriage which Walker (1983) reiterates as a 'form of being sold into slavery' (284). Walker appreciates the working together of both genders to achieve a non-sexist society, but not in terms of what Christie portrays to sell her dignity, knowledge, and freedom because of a man who is only after his own interest. Christie's love for Ananse beclouds her thought in that she is unable to see beyond what she can actually do to save the situation in that family:

CHRISTIE: Yes, indeed, this is the house of Mr G. k. Ananse. Oh, taxi drivers!

What comes out of their mouths sometimes is most amusing. He is

calling me Mrs. Ananse. [*Quite swollen-headed*] Mrs. Ananse, eh? It does sound good. [*She is not aware that ANANSE is watching her. She calls out to the driver*] My in-laws are coming right away, be patient (64).

In Christie's emotional expression towards Ananse, she feels ashamed about it because she is aware of the unvalued affection she is lavishing on him without any positive response. Rather than halt and taking caution, she does not see anything wrong in her action, but intensifies her effort to satisfy the man she loves wholeheartedly against Ananse's mother's feelings. While trying to get a taxi for the deceived Ananse's mother and aunt, Sutherland displays the societal implication on women's submissiveness to the males. This submissiveness does not allow women to question or investigate the male authority which makes Ananse fool these two old women to carry out his plans with the help of another submissive woman, Christie.

In Christie's submissiveness to Ananse, she is unable to demonstrate any act of sisterhood to Anansewa whom she ought to mentor and enlighten about the marriage as an avenue to silence her because she is aware that her freedom is at stake. The lack of sisterhood is also explored in the character of Ananse's mother who from the beginning sees Christie as not fit to be a woman. Immediately Ananse informs her there is trouble why he is trying to untie the knot, she believes that Christie is the trouble that can make a man cry uncontrollably the way Ananse does:

AYA: [*Wide-eyed with confusion*] Enemies? It's that woman Christie, isn't it?

The minute I met that woman here I felt instinctively that trouble marches alongside people of her kind (62).

These women lack the love for women's culture, women's emotional flexibility and women's strength that is a defence against male hegemonic dominance in Walker's womanist theory. Aya displays her hatred from the first time she sees Christie to create a psychic and physical disjuncture between them as women.

Likewise, Evaristi's combination of Elena and Gianna symbolises lack of sisterhood which makes Gianna see her mother-in-law as a woman of little value because of befriending a younger man that she feels is against their cultural belief. Gianna is completely characterised as a wife and mother figure that makes it impossible for readers to see her outside these feminine roles, but she is seen as weak as Elena at the end of the play. At first, Gianna assumes a patriarchal role of upholding the traditional values which have been made and perpetuated by the dominant gender, she is also seen as the model upon which the remaining two women are supposed to be judge. Elena and Lucy are constantly reprimanded for voicing and acting their opinions in public which makes them the opposite of what their gender should portray in the society. After the death of her husband, Cesare, Gianna finds it difficult to stand on her own, so she and her daughter move in with Elena whom she sees as a supporter who is capable of consoling her since she knows how it feels to be a widow. On the other hand, Gianna is moving in with Elena as a way to stylishly prevent her further contact with Davide. At this stage, Elena and Gianna are seen as the symbols of pity that crave support and understanding.

Ironically, Elena's other daughter-in-law Lucy seems to be the strongest of all these three women who is able to adapt to situations. This is evidenced in her actions to leave her middle-class American lifestyle to come to Scotland to live with Stefano's

eccentric attitude. Lucy creates a sense of sympathy, empathy and sisterhood in the play which helps Elena express herself and maintain her self-respect. Stefano disapproves Lucy's action through his constant reminder of her rudeness whenever she tries to support Elena's actions. At the beginning of the play, readers will think Lucy has got all she want to be vocal as a woman, but her vulnerability becomes visible as she finds it difficult to cope with Stefano's erratic nature in her marriage. While Lucy sees Elena as someone she can confide in and help to assert herself despite the antagonism she is going through from the people in her life, she explains further her reasons for leaving Stefano:

LUCY: I get the feeling from him that I've got to be the wall he bangs his fists against. I don't mind being depended on, I want to depend on him sometimes. I thought we could take turns. Like he can only be a little boy lost as long as he knows he's got somebody out there stone cold sober in gumboots looking for him. (36)

Lucy exposes the dependant nature of both genders through her marriage to Stefano. Despite Lucy's assertive nature in the play, she yearns for a man who she is able to rely on and not that of Stefano's attitude whose fear is visible. Analysing Lucy's confession to Elena shows Walker's view of woman-centeredness, the second key womanist principle. This contradicts the unity seeking ideology of same womanist theory, but allows Lucy to create a sense of 'self' that will suit her own existence outside of a man. Elena's two sons are seen as dependent especially Stefano who has failed in his chosen career as an actor and in his marriage. While Cesare is obsessed with trains and has a compulsive need to be accepted by everybody, both men find it

difficult to come to terms with their identities. Stefano's language in the play reveals the competitive and dominance style of the male communication hierarchy in his relationships with Elena, Lucy and even his brother, Cesare. On the one hand, he dislikes Cesare's patronising tone and on the other hand, envies the easy lifestyle of Cesare who at that young age is a successful business man while he struggles to become a successful known actor.

However, these two writers expose the male characters as selfish individuals, but most of the female characters are seen as the agents perpetrating the removal of their own desires. For instance, Gianna and Elena's attitudes in *Commedia* displace the woman's self-worth which is part of the basic sense of their security, peace and value which they ought to seek in the patriarchal system they find themselves. In order to please the socio-cultural norms of femininity at the end of the play, both characters exemplify the love of the society in relation to the male gender which denies them freedom and the power to bring about occurrences through the power of speech. Elena sacrifices her liberty for the society in order to avoid what they would say about her and the wrong impression she feels it will have on her identity. Janice D. Hamlet in *Accessing Womanist Thought: The Rhetoric of Susan L. Taylor* (2006) sees such action as the denial of self-affirmation that requires the use of thoughts and emotions to create what we want and then speak the words which will then manifest as reality by one's statement of affirmation; the person is planting a powerful suggestion in her mind. Affirmation is the foundation from which mutual respect with others can be established and maintained (222).

Although both writers demonstrate in their female protagonists the conscious effort to recognise what they are experiencing as forms of inaudibility and emotional exploitation, they hardly find a way out of this problem as they succumb to the male-dominated rules. The experiences that the writers place before their female protagonists to test them, and result in their displacement outside themselves until they feel lost and desire-less makes them compliant to the existing order and resigned to the passivity of their socially controlled gender roles. This is evidenced in Sutherland's Anansewa who finally marries Chief-Who-Is Chief that has been her father's choice since the beginning of his plot; he claims he is the one who will love his daughter more amongst the four suitors. Elena retires to the way she is seen at the beginning of the play as a widow in order to align with the societal expectation that Davide finds difficult to measure her courage. Christie gains Ananse's love at the end of the play whereby Ananse sees her as a 'Rare helper! Supporter' (91) whose praises Ananse at the end of the play for being instrumental to solving his puzzle.

Evaristi creates the character of Martha who believes her problem is generated from the old-fashion name she is given at birth which depicts her as a caring, faithful and feminine personality. She wishes to defeminise herself in order to fit into the male domain. She thinks of an imaginary Alexis who is bold, assertive and affirmative in the masculine realm. In this name-game, Evaristi draws the readers attention to the way in which individual's name is used as a form of identity within the community. Martha traces her source of powerlessness to the priest who serves as one of the agent of oppression to the female gender in the society by giving her the feminine name:

MARTHA: Seems to me some names are
Fucking wall-flowered
From the fucking start
Which does seem unfair since we all start off
With our own personal anonymous hearts.
I mean they've not stamped at birth.
Are they?
Was the bleedin priest wasn't it?
He could've said 'I now baptize
Thee Alexis'
Now there's a name.
So bleedin cool that name
It's hardly bleedin female. (9-10)

Martha demonstrates the concept of a womanist who advocate and participate in dialogue and action that concern the female gender survival in the society where the church is also seen as an avenue that oppresses her gender. Delores S. Williams in *Womanist Theology: Black Women's Voices* (1986) suggestion that womanist theological language must be an instrument for social and theological change in church and society is what Martha calls for at that point in the play. Evaristi's portrayal of Martha symbolises the way in which both genders perceive themselves in relations to the names given to them. Martha's view of the female name given to her by the priest reveals more on female identity as powerless which makes her long for a change of name in order to be powerful like the other gender. Walker believes

that this view perpetuates the notion of submissiveness fuelled by religion that allows the society to use women as atonement for male desire. For Martha to become powerful, she must renounce her feminine attributes and renounce her sexuality. Ironically, Martha wishes to masculinise her name in order to be an active member of the society. Evaristi reveals Steven as a character who wishes to retain his own masculine name that reveals power, aggressiveness and assertiveness:

STEVEN: Boy, oh boy, I enjoy being Johnny!

Johnny's fancy free sounding, kiss stealing

Free wheeling from the hot seat of spitfire. (11)

Martha's name may be perceived as a metaphor for voicelessness, silent desires and self-effacement accompanied by patriarchal limitations, while Steven comes across as a privileged individual who 'enjoys being Johnny' (11) due to the social recognition given to him and its representation of 'penis' within the society. Johnny as used in this context symbolises strength, ability, security, aggression, confidence and competitiveness that characterises the male phallus. As such, the phallus is the image of the creative principle, symbolising the process by which the Supreme Being procreates the universe. The phallus is also a symbol of virility, courage and power which is one of the reasons Martha questions her own existence in relation to the name given by a man of God. Martha explores self-expression as an act of one's personality, feelings or idea which can be done through language as she tries to articulate her 'self' through words. This corresponds with Siobhan's opinion at the beginning of the play whereby her words are misinterpreted and misrepresented:

SIOBHAN. I was really flattered

When he said I had balls
So I called him a tit
And got hit.
Oh boy it's hard to compliment
When girls the words were never meant for
You.
Doo beee do!
I was flattered
When he said I has sass
Then he gave me a slap
On the ass!
Oh ladies what bewilderment
Whichever do you think he meant
Ass or sass? (2)

The use of words like 'balls', 'tit' and 'ass' has sexual meanings which are determined by the gender prescriptions in the society. Culturally and linguistically, words relating to the male gender are attributed with superiority and lordliness while those words relating to the female gender are signified with inferiority and subjugation. Semantically as well, 'Balls' in the context is used as a thing of pride for Siobhan who sees herself as being courageous, but for her to tell the 'him' he is a 'tit' sounds derogatory to the male she is talking to because it signifies he is feminine and weak. Evaristi plays on her use of language in order to defeminise the female words and to give such words positive connotations, but the words are still at the

mercy of the female users who seems to be unassertive and capable of expressing themselves without being ridiculed.

Although both playwrights seem to explore the issue of male hypocrisy, their portrayal of the female protagonists differs. While Evaristi's Elena and Siobhan do not see themselves outside the patriarchal system, Sutherland portrays Anansewa and Ampoma as characters that their male counterparts depends on for social recognition and esteems in the plays. This exposes that Sutherland is also entrapped in the cultural guilt economy that trade black female identity for black male gratification in the society. The destiny and ego of the men involved in their lives is tied with female passivity that is the expectation of women. This hypocrisy starts within the family that makes these women see themselves as being inferior to the men. Elsa Barkley Brown's *Womanist Consciousness: Maggie Lena Walker and the Independent Order of Saint Luke* (1989) as republished in *The Womanist Reader* (2006) observes that Maggie Lena Walker's analyses family as a "reciprocal metaphor for community". That is family is community and community is family (180).

Brown's observation may be applied to Ananse, Stefano and Edufa's hypocrisy. Their respective behaviour is indicative of the men's focus on acquisition of power through aggressiveness and subjugation of women. Stefano in the final scene sees himself as a failure but rarely admits it in his mother's presence. He shows up in Elena's garden after his awareness of Lucy leaving him:

STEFANO: What are you doing out in the garden? You'll catch your death.

Lucy's leaving me Mamma. I'll tell you about it tomorrow. 'Sfunny I feel quite calm, quite understanding.

I don't think I was ever really the marrying kind, I can't blame her. Maybe
I'll feel different in the morning, when the pain hits me, but right now . . .
just inevitable. . . never been pipe and slippers. No idea what she wanted
really. Nomadic life acting, can't drag the nest along with you on a string,
don't get upset. You don't mind if I stay the night? Felt like coming home.
'Sfunny me not throwing a bender about it. (*Stares at her*) What the fuck are
you wearing? (38)

Throughout Stefano's monologue, Elena refuses to interrupt him even when personal questions are asked that require answers. As he finishes his speech, he goes into the house maybe as a way of avoiding any interrogation from his mother or as a way of protecting his masculine ego. Elena's silence during his son's speech mirrors the male gender as always taking control of communication which depicts him taking the dominant position in Elena's life once again. His speech starts with a calm, cool and collected tone, but later becomes the victim of his own words while trying to see reasons for Lucy's decision. This mother-son relationship shows that men do not interact with women through conversation but talk at them as an avenue of instructing them on what to do. While Evaristi and Sutherland's female characters portray women's language as a language of intimacy and connection, the men's language signify that of status, defence and ego which is what Martha's character challenges in *Mouthpieces* as she reiterates Jackson's (2010) observation about how language shapes human experiences, how one thinks and what one thinks about which orders the way one make sense of one's experiences.

Although at the end of these plays, Ampoma dies, Elena returns to her widowhood status, Anansewa is married to one of the chiefs, and Martha is unable to change her name, but in Walker's womanist view, all of these women zeal for autonomy sketch pictures of hope for the other female characters that are unable to question their objectified being. For example, Martha challenges the religious setting as well as the oppressive society that creates sexist notion from the name given to female children in the church. These female characters loyalty to female gender and search for freedom become their forms of resistance to the patriarchal system; thus, help to see their voices as marks of freedom that make them subjects of their own story by being assertive. Being womanish or assertive, they resist the oppressive structure that limits the female gender's knowledge, power, self-expression, choice and self-realisation which creates an insatiable curiosity that borders rebelliousness in their quest for truth. This view of assertiveness will be explored further in chapter six in the works of Zulu Sofola and Rona Munro that see it as a feminine identity which women must possess to change their economic, social, cultural, political and linguistic circumstances.

CHAPTER SIX

WOMANIST AESTHETICS OF ASSERTIVENESS: FEMALE CHALLENGE OF PATRIARCHAL CULTURE IN ZULU SOFOLA'S *WEDLOCK OF THE GODS* (1973) AND *SONG OF A MAIDEN* (1991) AND RONA MUNRO'S *BOLD GIRLS* (1991) AND *IRON* (2002).

ZULU SOFOLA

Nwazulu Sofola was born in 1935 and died in 1995. She is from Delta State of Nigeria. She is known as the matriarch of the Nigerian theatre and the first published female author in Nigeria. She is also the first African female professor of theatre arts. Zulu is a renowned writer who studied both in Nigeria and the United States of America. Until her death, she has fifteen published plays to her credit which include: *The Deer Hunter and The Hunter's Pearl* (1969), *The Disturbed Peace of Christmas* (1971), *Wedlock of the Gods* (1972), *King Emene: Tragedy of a Rebellion* (1974), *The Wizard of Law* (1975), *The Sweet Trap* (1977), *Old Wines Are Tasty* (1981), *Song of a Maiden* (1991). Her writing style is simple, often portrays her knowledge of self and pride of African heritage and tradition which is celebrated in her plays through her use of names, idioms, proverbs, icons and so on. Zulu is believed not to write against social injustice that is against women's independence from men and society at large which often make her critics see her as a liberal feminist.

Synopsis of Zulu Sofola's plays

Wedlock of the Gods

It is a classical piece of African literature that explores the subject of taboo and arranged marriage. This is a tragic play that exposes the ritual of death and mourning in the African society. Sofola tells the story of a young girl, Ogwoma who is given away in marriage to a man who she never loves as an exchange of her dowry to cure a sick younger brother. When the man dies, Ogwoma sees it a way to free herself from the marriage she never wants. Instead of mourning for three months and then marry the dead husband's brother, she defies this and engages in an unc customary relationship with her former lover, Uloko, whom she is not allowed to marry because he could not pay the dowry. While she expresses a sense of liberation, the mother of the dead husband becomes irritated and takes vengeance for supposedly killing her son.

Song of a Maiden

A group of academics arrive in Shao to carry out some researches. Due to their eccentric behaviour especially that of professor Oduyinka, the villagers are scared of them and decide to relegate them to live on the hill top. The gods of Shao declare a ritual marriage between professor Oduyinka and one of the village maidens, Yetunde, daughter of Alabi as a way of averting imminent disaster. Sofola makes Yetunde to see the marriage as a distasteful idea and professor Oduyinka sees it as a barbaric arrangement. At the end, both abhor the idea of arranged marriage as both refused to be joined.

RONA MUNRO

Rona Munro is a Scottish writer born in 1959 at Aberdeen. She has written plays for theatre, radio, and television. Some of her theatre plays include *Fugue* (1983), *Dust and Dreams* (1986), *Bold Girls* (1990), *Catch a Falling Star!* (2004), *Iron* (2002), *Dirt Under the Carpet* (2007), *The Last Witch* (2009).

Synopsis of Rona Munro's plays

Bold Girls

It is a play of four scenes of unequal length set in Northern Ireland at the time of trouble. Marie's house serves as the place of comfort for the four women, Marie, Cassie, Nora and Deirdre, Munro presents in the play. Munro explores the theme of truth which she introduces early in her four characters on stage. While these characters live in pretence and refuse to face the realities staring them in the face, Deirdre is able to cut through their web of lies to reveal the truth about the women and the men involved in their lives as she seeks the truth about her own life and identity.

Iron

Munro's play presents crime and punishment, which costs a mother her daughter. It shows the unexpected twists in the lives of a mother, Fay, and her daughter, Josie, meeting sixteen years after Fay has been in prison where she is serving a life sentence for murdering her husband. Josie is a twenty five year old career woman who has not been in touch with her mother. Once they meet in the prison visiting room, their meetings are overseen by the prison two guards who make sure there are no physical contacts. As they build intimacy, one tries to mend each other's broken part at first, exchanging real life's experiences for lost recollections which did not last as Fay is not ready to revisit her

case despite every persuasion by her daughter who is ready to make her innocence known. Rather, this leads to a strained relationship where both have to go separate ways again.

Introduction

The focus of the analysis in the previous chapter was a notion that both genders are made victims of language in patriarchal societies. This chapter explores the idea that women can change the way the society perceives them through the use of assertive language, thus creating the aesthetics of assertiveness. As this is observed in womanist aesthetics that does not only offer women the possibility to change the views and readings of the world around them; the author of this study recognises another view that deals with women's assertiveness that give women the opportunities of changing their own world without being disrespectful to their cultural heritages. The womanist aesthetics make women see them 'selves' as being valuable, important and essential, it gives them a sense that they can make effective changes through assertiveness. Women see aesthetics in assertiveness as a sort of help, the formation of a strong self which allows them to explore the opportunities of disagreeing with certain socio-cultural, historical and religious beliefs that limit and destroy their capabilities. Like Hegel's theory of self in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (1991), these female characters recognise themselves, accept themselves and see themselves as being moral even if the male characters and the societies refuse to see them that way.

Apart from the aesthetic idea that sees women in relation to beauty, this chapter engages in an analysis of aesthetics as a possible presentation of dynamic experiences in language. This shows that aesthetic idea is not only presenting a particular rational idea of reason that allows some of the female characters to strive for maximum representation through their language and actions; it does presents a

variety of aesthetic ideas that help create different view of femininity. With regards to Walker's definition of womanism, the womanist aesthetic idea is not merely a presentation of the body; it also sets the imagination and understanding of the female characters/gender into harmony, creating the same kind of self-sustaining and self-containing feeling of pleasure as the beautiful.

Marcia Eaton notes in *Aesthetics Obligation* (2008) that the value of disinterested aesthetics enjoyment has come under heavy critical scrutiny on the part of feminists who have deconstructed the idea and argued that a supposedly disinterested stance is at least sometimes actually a covert and controlling voyeurism. This critical stance does not necessitate abandonment of ideals of impartial judgement or objective normative standards of evaluation altogether, but rather draws attention to the ways in which the mere act of looking can manifest relations of social power. Sofola and Munro create characters and storylines that are representational; appealing to readers' physicality and emotion. Reading the four plays under scrutiny in this chapter, one view the nature of aesthetic attitude nonetheless that remains comprehensive. This elusiveness allows certain attitudes that readers need to adopt with art such as openness, sensitivity, and willingness to enter imaginative experience which comes from people as readers rather than the art or artist involved.

In discussing the aesthetics of female language, assertiveness is a key word. The present writer employs assertiveness in relation to Walker's theory to re-analyse the concerns of women who are neither trivial nor petty as the society sees them. Both writers are overtly vocal in creating female characters that are capable of instigating a process of social and cultural change through their actions. Taking into

consideration Luce Irigaray's observation in an interview which Couze Venn interpreted in *Women's Exile* (1995), the first step in the movements of women liberation is to enable every woman to become conscious that what she has felt in her own experience is a condition felt by all women which makes it possible for that experience to become politicised (86). Politicising women's experience is not the type of politics instituted by men but the politics that involves women's issues with regards to their own contrasting tales.

Such experiences point at the exploitation women encounter from childhood till adulthood which affects their bodies and psychology as well. As identified in earlier plays, the issue of social exploitation leads to psychological exploitation of the females in a system where the social mode of existence itself in general exploits women. In other words, such a patriarchal system allows social silence and subjectivity as part of what constitute the female identity. This notion will be discussed further in this chapter.

Sofola and Munro explore beyond beauty and ugliness as pre-eminent aesthetic notions whereby morality and aesthetics as being interwoven which allows some of the female characters to possess audacious abilities. The two writers portray characters who often have the intuitive sense to see what comprises women's devaluation such as personal experiences, depreciation of worth which accumulates into an overwhelming sense of sadness and pain, gendered power dynamics and gendered responsibilities. Some of the modes of devaluation that can be found in their plays include battering, emotional and verbal abuse, sexual harassment, incest, molestation, rape and murder exposed through language which happens to women

regardless of class, age, race and sexual orientation. Adrienne Rich notes in *On Lies, Secrets and Silence* (1980) that:

When we become acutely, disturbingly aware of the language we are using and that using us, we begin to grasp a material resource which women have never before collectively attempted to repossess . . . as long as our language is inadequate, our vision remains formless, our thinking and feeling are still running in the old cycles, our process may be 'revolutionary' but not transformative (2).

Rich emphasises the alienation of women's experience within the patriarchal society starts from their use of language and if taken for granted, women may not get the real transformation needed. Owing to the fact that one becomes empowered through the use and influence of language, creating a good awareness that generates feminine language adequacy is needed. This is reiterated in Deborah Cameron's *Feminism and Linguistic Theory* (1995) that language 'breaks' us; repossessed, and it can also remake us (130). This makes language a tool for resistance that can help the female gender become linguistically competent to re-engage with the societal values as observed in the Sofola and Munro's works.

Rather than creating women as the muted group in their plays, Munro and Sofola do not only present these female characters as symbols of social change, but as characters capable of active radical rethinking and action whose strong self, self-definition and self-assertion engages in the rough and tumble of everyday life, not without the fear, but with a resolute mindset. This is re-emphasised in Walker's theory that sees the availability of various options for women with different talents, gender orientations, views, commitments and cultural values which help to re-define them in diverse ways. For example, Modupe Kolawole identifies Sofola's works in

Womanism and African Consciousness (1997) as definitive and well-balanced in womanist consciousness. She acknowledges Sofola's writing ability as an interpreter of African cultural values to the Africans for the latter's self-knowledge, self-realization and self-appreciation in dignity for meaningful self-emancipated life and living in post-colonial Africa. Although this study re-evaluate Kolawole's view of Sofola's works, it does acknowledge that the female characters' womanist consciousness help to chart life courses that suit them as individuals.

Munro's play *Iron* offers a tremendous insight into human situation, especially into women's lives. While the play focuses on crime and punishment, it does so through the exploration of the mother-daughter bond that is different from that in *Bold Girls*. Munro establishes Fay's interest in her daughter's success as a young executive who needs to integrate better, go out and have the idea of fun rather than the regular visits to the prison. Although Fay likes these visits, she wants her daughter to have a different view of considering femininity by shedding her conservative live style of wearing suits for a bright one by putting on red dress. Fay and Josie's relationship is acknowledged by Elyse Sommer in *A Curtain Up Review of Munro's Iron* (2003) that:

Josie does change and even though that change inevitably put her in a red dress, the real transformation comes from the bits and pieces of unravelled memories and the growing beliefs that her mother killed the father in self-defence and should have another hearing (2).

This other hearing proposed by Josie breaks the link between the two that are just discovering themselves afresh. Josie's conservative way has been influenced by her mother whose womanish gall is used against her when she kills her husband. In as much as Walker's theory calls for womanish attitude from women, it does not in any

way support the killing of men. Although in situations of self-defence, Walker's womanist theory does not explore if the killing of one's oppressor is allowed. Walker's heroine Celie in *The Color Purple* (2004) is portrayed as a character who continues to endure inhuman treatment until she is offered an escape. Walker acknowledges a sense of enlarged sympathy that can help sustain coalition partnership. In Fay and Josie's case, their psyches are both affected by the situations around them, Josie is mostly influenced by her granny's conservative ideas and the view of her mother but the abstract humanity that embraces differences in others gives her the immediate interest and sympathy in her mother's case. This makes her inquisitive about what leads to her mother's crime and punishment which Fay does not want to speak about. Fay played by Eileen Pollock delivers an honest, kinetic performance. From the moment she meets her daughter Josie, Liz FitzGibbon, viewers see the impact of the sixteen years distance between these two women who longed for companionship. The production directed by Venessa Fielding at the Complex Productions, Smithfield opened between the 10th and 28th May, 2011, staged in the round brought the audience into the main staging area as if they were in the actual prison.

Like Campbell, (1973); Coates, (1986, 1987); Coates and Cameron (1989); Johnson, (2000); Wood, (2003); Walker's theory also argues that psychologically, the environmental response to a young child determines the adult 'self' they grow to be unless such child becomes rebellious to fight the limiting factors of childhood. For example, she believes that women who are abused from childhood are psychically conflicted while they try to be part of the mainstream patriarchal system. This is reiterated by Kim Marie Vaz's observation in *Womanist Archetypal Psychology*

(2006) that faulty self-object experiences lead to individuals' feeling fragmented and empty (237). Both writers reveal how some of the patriarchal ideologies imbibed from childhood affect the female characters who later question their individual beliefs in the men and culture.

To these assertive female characters, aesthetics is more than virtuous attributes as the society sees it. Although, one could argue that females are seen as grotesque by the very nature of their physicality, but through the female characters course of questioning, they are able to distinguish between the beautiful and the ugly that show their capability of being assertive. This allows the writers to use language creatively as a powerful avenue to explore different themes which have been mentioned and analysed earlier in the works of other writers. Thereby allowing Munro and Sofola treat their themes in ways that expose the issues of aesthetics, assertiveness, and boldness in the language of their female characters. The main theme of this chapter's analysis is a term recognised by Cameron (1995) as the language of power (199) which is a variety of language that has to be used if the speaker is to function effectively in the context which often rejects the issue of stereotypes within the linguistic determinism. This form of language identifies that both the form and the content are important to the speaker in order to create the meaning needed and pass across the appropriate message without being misinterpreted or opposed to.

Exploring the aesthetical view involved in female assertiveness, Sofola and Munro's works identify the feelings, concepts and judgements of the female gender arising from social perceptions which allows the female characters' language under analysis to be considered emotive, beautiful and sublime without necessarily being considered

as socially moral. These plays communicate what the writers perceive as the truth and also express their feelings which arouse the readers' judgement of the female characters' language. Such feelings are made possible through the writers' use of aesthetics of emotion that include the fear, sympathy and empathy.

This is seen in Sofola's portrayal of the female characters who are often aware of the cultural disregard for women that affect their self-esteem and self-confidence. As these characters engage in different level of communication with parents, peers, and others in the plays, it exposes their negative treatments and their vulnerable situations. These situations make them subordinate and trapped in the society that sees them as the 'second sex' where they are expected to serve in total submission and self-abnegation. Ironically, Sofola reverses the some of these situations to presents her female characters as having the definitive and the self-consciousness to challenge some West African cultural patriarchal identities given to them. This is also evident in Munro's two plays where she portrays women who are affected by European decadence, women who do not know exactly what the future holds for them, and women whose struggle is similar to people chasing a shadow, but who are able to create niches for themselves in the end. Although not all of the female characters in these plays have a zeal for change, they create them with voices of direct protest which shows female dependence and the inequality within the society. The common interesting bond between the characters whom these two writers create is the self-knowledge; self-realisation and self-appreciation which they build in their female characters to always assert themselves.

Munro and Sofola's works present female characters who face a sense of loss through their use language and actions which allow them the opportunity to make choices they feel are suitable for them. Munro's *Bold Girls* (1990) presents four women with different lives who are affected by similar patriarchal ideological problems which leaves them confined within domestic sphere. The locations of the actions depict the private (female) and the public (male) spheres which represent the Belfast female working class community. Marie's house becomes a sense of bond for the coming together of various types of women to form a small conscious awareness group to help review their dented identities. Although these women possess different feminine attributes, they continuously seek and reject sisterhood, discuss, analyse and examine their situations while they share their experiences. The play explores these women's hopes, desires, dreams, anticipations, doubts, hopelessness and expectations.

On same ground, Ogwoma's powerless situation at the very beginning of the *Wedlock of the Gods* (1972) review the feelings of women's personal freedom and their interconnectedness within the society whereby women's freedom is associated with the socio-cultural beliefs. Sofola explores this by making her to marry a man who is not her choice but since her bride price is needed to treat a dying brother, she is left with no choice than to accept the decision. She is bound to obey her parents' decision which remains final unless there is a higher bidder and since there is none, she is forced to marry the man of her parents' choice. This is a situation that makes the female gender handicapped in the society and family that should protect them, rather the treatment they experience make them suffer in silence. While the men in most societies, they tend to grow up to be selfish; the women languish in pain and

anger with the hope of having some changes in the tradition that will give them personal autonomy over self and body. Like Evaristi's portrayal of Pink and Lemon in the previous chapter, Sofola also reveals the understanding of gender that most children learn through early communication that the males are generally more valued than the females.

This is experienced by Ogwoma whose worth is being traded for the health of her brother's early initiation into manhood as a means of healing him. Susan Basow notices in *Gender, Stereotypes and Roles* (1992) that nearly everywhere in the world, most couples prefer male children to female children (129). This preference is often communicated to female children and it directly or indirectly affects the female psyche and the view they have of themselves. Walker believes that with womanish gall, these females can be encouraged to have psychic freedom without fear, self-hate and guilt, but with courage to be daring in the face of conformity and conspiracy while revealing their maltreatment.

Likewise, Munro allows Deirdre's appearance in *Bold Girls* to establish the hidden truth which reveals the women's moment of anger, pain, anxiety, revelation and their waiting for the moment of change. She disrupts the confined private sphere of the other three women in the play and unravels the mystery of Michael's infidelity after his death. While Deirdre has been denied fatherhood, Marie lives with an undisclosed truth of being in a secured and loving relationship which allows her to tolerate and cope after his death by consoling herself about his ever presence in the house, but Deirdre exposes the whole truth. In the performance of *Bold Girls* by 7:28 Scottish People's Theatre at Cumbernauld in 1991, directed by Lynne Parker, a key

connection is established between Deirdre, played by Andrea Irvine, and Marie, played by Paula Hamilton, with the lighting change which changes the mode of the story from realism to expressionism. The story behind the actions of these female characters allow the readers to ask rhetorical questions as Munro portrays the element of irony in the title of the play, but it is also an acknowledgement of these women's strength against the backdrop of the bloody civil war and the limited choices they have been given in the society. The view of these female characters who have different experiences as individuals reveal the societal perception of femalehood.

However, Cassie is portrayed as leaving the past behind and forging into the future. Cassie's encouragement to Marie to go clubbing with them tells the readers how long Michael has been dead (three and half years), yet Marie has refused to forget his memory, she still treats him as if he is ever present. This irritates Cassie who is conscious of her part in Michael's infidelity and lies. Munro portrays the club as the public domain which gives the female characters the opportunity to leave their domestic domain to be outside their comfort zone, but it also liberates them, enables them to be different which is vivid in the character of Cassie who become so bold and audacious as she refuses to allow femininity or motherhood limit her potential.

Cassie's language and attitude becomes more vocal while at the club unlike the other two, Marie and Nora. Marie becomes more respectful, loses her self-confidence as a way of showing respect to the masculine domain while Nora becomes a mother figure who curtails the excesses of the other two at the club which almost causes an open confrontation between her and her daughter. Nora becomes an example of

Walker's view of a big woman syndrome in African and African American societies, a mother figure sort of, whose primary function is to control excesses of a womanish female and silence her. Couched in this cultural view, the big woman also helps the society to see female submissiveness as the yardstick to measuring female standards. Tuzyline Jita Allan observes in *The Color Purple: A Study of Walker's Womanist Gospel* (1995) that for Walker, the battle against patriarchal society and its multiple sins of sexism, racism, classism and homophobia (amongst others) needs the womanist spirit of defiance and irreverence, on the one hand, and the desire for social integration, on the other (70).

In line with Allan's observation of Walker's womanist view, she believes that the female gender needs the confidence to resist the status quo and treatments in order to stop the massive oppression they experience which is also seen in Munro's depiction of Cassie:

CASSIE. To the bold girls.

NORA. And who are they?

CASSIE. That's us.

NORA. There's only one bold girl here, Cassie Ryan, and she's broadcasting it to the world.

CASSIE. What do you mean?

NORA. What do you think I mean?

CASSIE. Well I don't know, Mummy, that's why I'm asking.

NORA. And you with your man inside.

CASSIE. And what about him?

NORA. What about you?

MARIE. Oh look do you see B.T and that other boy looking over here?

What's on their mind do you think?

NORA. Oh we're great entertainment tonight, Marie.

CASSIE. Mummy if there's something on your mind, would you just out
and say it please? (219-220).

The argument between mother and daughter reveals the power struggle in communication which prevents both of them from understanding each other's needs. While Cassie wants to be free from most traditional views of femininity, Nora wants her to be the womanly woman who is seen as being polite, chaste and conscious of all her actions. Horvat (1999) suggests that:

the conflict between Nora and Cassie goes deeper than just about the braless dress Cassie is sporting; it is about competition for the dominant position in their relationship. This competition is reflected in Nora and Cassie's interaction in the sense that Cassie's toast ('To the bold girls') 42 is challenged by Nora ('And who are they?')43. (239)

This also shows another level of communication that women can successfully engage with competitive language the same way men do. Although Cassie's character complies in many aspects to Walker's idea of womanish behaviour, she still remains confined within the patriarchal framework. Her choice of words seems to be limited especially with Nora who is ever present in her life. Apart from being a 'big woman', Nora becomes a representation of the domestic woman who indulges the men in the play; covers up for their failures in the domestic sphere and shower them with love. Like Ogwoma's experience, Cassie's bitter description of what she perceives as improper upbringing explores how the patriarchal society favours the upbringing of

the male children and how the same system devalues the female children to always take the second position in all they do. She accuses her mother of lavishing instructive love on her which contributes to the difficulty she experiences with her mother, while the boys get pampering love that moulds them into man and excessively self-centred at the expense of the female gender. She questions the unattractive nature of men who think they are the centre of the universe and men who think that drinking, gambling and conning each other is the height of their social achievement:

CASSIE. My Mummy taught me how to raise my family. How to love them, how to spoil them. Spoil the wee girls with housework and reproaches, the length of their skirts and the colour of their: how they sit, how they slouch, how they don't give their fathers peace, how they talk, how they talk back, how they'll come to no good if they carry on like that. They're bold and bad and broken at fourteen but you love them as you love yourself . . . that's why you hurt them so much.

Ruin the boys, tell them they're noisy and big and bold and their boots are too muddy, ('Clear that mess up for me Cassie'.) Tell them to leave their fathers in peace and come to their Mummy for a cuddle, tell them they'll always be your own wee man, always your bold wee man and you love them better than you love their Daddy, you love them best of all . . . that's why they hurt you so much (225).

This shows Cassie's resentment of different ways in which girls and boys are perceived and brought up in social terms. The audiences/readers are encouraged to perceive men as indifferent figures, often unfaithful and continuously engaged in struggles for 'higher causes'. Women's strife is none of their concern, they are absent from their lives both physically and emotionally. While Cassie's behaviour reveals her boldness and assertive nature, Nora depiction shows her entrapment in the socio-cultural belief which shapes her psychological turmoil within the social transaction. On the one hand, Cassie's rebellious behaviour might be directed at her mother which gives her more confidence to challenge and respond to her unfair sexist treatment, but on the other hand, it exposes a system that discriminates against the female gender. She uses this as an opportunity to re-define herself; to show how sexist language distorts truth whereby people see the men as the ultimate of right thinking, criticism and reform within a patriarchal system. Cassie is able to use this womanish action to call people's attention to the female identity that has been ignored, therefore allowing her to challenge the inhuman situation against her gender. Munro allows Cassie to experience the love between mother and daughter, woman and man, but she is powerless to change any of these situations, rather she becomes a victim of manipulated love that reveals women as being marginal under a patriarchal stronghold.

Like the previous chapter, Munro also identifies parents as a vital agent amongst the people who influence gender identities from childhood. The typical perspective that girls should be communal through their communication, helpful, cooperative, nurturing, caring and so on in order to conform to the socio-cultural features of the female gender is exposed in Cassie lines. At this stage, the audiences observes that

the play is a cry of pain and anger, yet it seeks hope to break from the moulds which create the distorted women and men.

Similarly, Yetunde's behaviour in Sofola's *Song of a Maiden* (1991) portrays the female characters coming to terms with the inhuman situation the society put them through and are ready to change that situation. Yetunde's reaction at the point of the mutual union between her and Professor Oduyinka baffles the society that sees female voicelessness as an opportunity to exploit the female gender. In her own words that:

YETUNDE. There are goats in the markets, but Yetunde has fools for parents
and the people chose to use Yetunde instead of the goats (11).

At this point, Yetunde sees the society's act of forced union as a curse to womanhood which should not be allowed. Sofola uses a radical artistic restructuring element to call readers attention to the inhuman treatment of the female gender who is to be employed as a form of ritual coexistence between two different worlds. Unlike Ogwoma's situation which allows her parents to see the monetary value of their daughter, Sofola characterises Yetunde to see nothing of importance in the money and education of Professor Oduyinka, but to see it as an unfair treatment on femalehood which should be challenged against her father, Alabi's, opinion that "a man who challenges the gods is an enemy of the society" (15). Different from Nora and Cassie, Yetunde seeks companionship in her mother, Aduke who feels her daughter's pain:

ADUKE. I am not the happiest of mothers. My heart is heavy. Mothers prepare
with joy for this season when all the marriageable daughters of the land

are led to their husbands. My story will always be crooked (12).

Unlike Aduke who is ready to fight her husband and reign abuses on him till the mutual union is changed or stopped between her daughter and the academic, Marie's portrayal is that of the perfect example of the expectations of female gender within her domestic and public domain in the society. Sofola's description of Aduke's argument with her husband over their daughter's issue reveals her as a woman without the social respect for her husband. This behaviour is not a feature of the good wife in the West African society that associates femininity and respects as a way of distinguishing between a good and a bad woman which reminds her of the choice she has in selecting Alabi amongst other suitors that is not suppose to be especially from a married woman:

ADUKE. I knew it. Since I stepped into this house it has been one misfortune after the other. There were a hundred and one suitors who flooded my father's house in search of my hand in marriage. I rejected all of them and gave myself to you because I had thought that you had a head moulded with the best of care. I had thought that there was a head of fortune on your shoulders. But the gods deceived me and I chose a hard head with no room for good fortune (15).

Although, African view of women's aesthetic may be used to interpret Aduke's character as morally wrong as it does not conform with social acceptability, Sofola treats Aduke's womanish gall as being able to combat female fragmentation and sexist language. This shows the model of Walker's expectation of black womanhood who is strong and resilient enough. Despite the social recognition given to men,

Aduke's language reveals her as a woman who is able to challenge her husband's silence and acceptability of the god's decision on the issue that concerns their only daughter. Aduke's language explores Cameron's (1992) view that language can be used to 'conscientiously' disseminate 'accurate' information (103) as readers' become aware that she is not in support of the mutual union and the social treatment of women. On the one hand, Sofola shows that some women are reclaiming ambitions, intelligence and assertiveness as part of what constitutes female gender in socio-cultural levels. In another view, Sofola's official website (2011) noted that although Sofola spent most of her life writing against social injustice, she was not the hard core "feminist" who preached women's independence from men or the bra burning approach to demonstrate women's freedom from men's oppression in society, rather, she was paradoxical in her beliefs in the "conceptual approach that a person be treated not on the basis of gender but purely as a human being worthy of respect".

Unlike Cassie and Aduke, Marie is depicted as an easy going and quiet woman who is not ready to confront masculine power in the society. Marie prefers to put them where the society wants them to be and seeks to resolve disputes by compromising her freedom and joy to the men's societal positions. Different from Cassie's portrayal whom Munro depicts as bold, aggressive, assertive and energetic from the beginning of the play, Marie ghost-talks about Michael although she does acknowledge to Cassie that she knows he was no saint, but she still misses him. Marie prefers to tell her son about the good side of his father being bold and charismatic rather than the undisclosed truth that she only knows a hint of, paints him as a moralist who he is not but sees it as a way of relieving herself of the hatred she should have for him.

MARIE. I just bring him into the fire and I hold him and I rock him and say
... (*Getting dreamy*) Your Daddy was a good man and a brave man and
he did the best he could and he's in heaven watching out for you and
when you're good he's happy, he's smiling at you and that's what keeps
us together, keeps me going, keeps me strong because your Daddy can
see us ... (213).

Marie is presented as a character who believes in the idea of faith and love which Munro reveals through the two pictures of the Virgin Mary and that of Michael hang on the wall of her house which constantly reminds her of the feminine role of motherhood and love. Marie accepts her domestic role without any form of grievance or resentment. On the contrary, Cassie's story is different from Marie's in the sense that she sees no good in men, she mocks their dominant position in the family and society in order to make Marie realise whom her husband was before his death. She portrays men in a humorous and with negative outlook to Marie's son, Mickey:

CASSIE (*off*). I'll tell you what happens to all those men that drink whisky and
all those wee boys that drink raspberry ice cream syrup; their intestines
get eaten away and their stomachs get eaten away and all the other bits
inside just shrivel up and die. Then they've no insides left at all and all they
can do is sit in front of the television all day and cough and shout for cups
and cups and cups of tea because that's the only thing that can fill up their
awful, empty, shrivelled insides Yes just like him . . . and him as well,
so will you give me that cup? That's a good boy (190).

Cassie's words ridicule these physically invisible male characters involved in all the female characters' lives. Cassie challenges the idea of men contentedly contained within a sexist system that makes women their sex-object which corresponds with Wood's (2003) assertion that the expectation of male dominance in heterosexual relationships is reflected in three important ways, 'division of labour, patterns of influence and decision making, and violence between partners' (199). This reveals the negative treatment of the female characters which is also noticeable in Sofola's plays.

Sofola's plays portray her male characters as being absurd and pathetic when compared to the female characters who are their chattel in the society. While these female characters are under physical, emotional and sexual violence, some get to a point of recognition where they question their "selves" which prepares them for the necessary change. Therefore, this makes them see gender in the society from the view that favours the men at their own expense, but at the same time elaborated by their parents, peers and different relationships they engage in that makes them outsiders, foreigners and nature bound.

Munro presents Marie's character as a passive observer who is capable of wisdom and changes that later turns her into a different audacious personality which will be discussed later. Leaving the life of being subordinate, Marie's view about reverencing a dead husband, turning him into a Christ-like figure, a saintly figure becomes significant when she finally takes off his picture at the end of the play. Metaphorically, this is an act of Michael's fall from grace to grass that helps Marie regain her inner consciousness and allows her to see herself as capable. Marie's

development reveals that each individual woman has her own story to tell that is always different. Although women might be going through similar situations, but each has a story of herself and for herself which is different from the story that society has said or narrated about them from the masculine perspective. Pamela Abott and Clare Wallace notice in their work, *An Introduction to Sociology: Feminist Perspectives* (1997) that men and women, oppressors and oppressed, confront one another in their everyday lives - they are not just role players acting out a prepared script. Human actors in specific social contexts can and do oppose each other: men do exercise power and women do experience pain and humiliation (28). Although Abott and Wallace discuss the importance of feminism, they expose how sociology has disregard women. Both see the collective power of men and women which has been hindered by the society's sexist assumptions that have always privilege the male - patriarchal ideologies over the female who is to take on the submissive role like Marie and other female characters. In order for Marie to continue to be the narrator of the play, to see herself in her new way and to treat herself as the subject of her story, she needs to be the subject of her own story which will enable her destroy the memory of dead Michael; thus breaking the picture she once makes the subject of her existence. While the breaking of Michael's picture is his removal from Marie's life, the picture of Virgin Mary reveals her belief of faith, goodness, and motherhood. These two shows the new but sharp contrast of Marie's belief which destroys the oppressive patriarchal system and celebrates a new matriarchal system taking control of her.

In the womanist view, while Walker agitates for social wholesomeness, Munro and Sofola present some social constructs that should be rejected and destroyed in order

for females to operate assertively and autonomously. Such actions mirrors Judith Barry and Sandy Flitterman proposal in *Textual Strategies: The Politics of Art-Making* (1980) as an aesthetics designed to subvert the production of women as commodity. Both writers call for a review of women's situation and new attributes that can make them human and not incapable female gender. For example, this view goes along with Munro's portrayal of Marie at the point she becomes audacious which also mirrors how Sofola portrays Ogwoma in *Wedlock*. Ogwoma refuses to see her mourning period as a period that will limit her desire once again; rather she sees it as a time she can challenge the tradition which has held her back for years. Her refusal to wait for the mourning period to be over before engaging in the assumed adulterous act with her childhood lover Uloko, whom she is denied because of bride price, reveals her as a determined and audacious character. Although both lovers are aware such action is against their tradition, they are willing to face the consequence. Since they do not want to waste the time they consider as an opportunity after the death of her husband for fear she would be betrothed to her dead husband's relation she does not love. While her friend tries to caution her actions, she becomes more assertive in her choice of words damning all consequences, personalises her words to have a sense of autonomy, drawing a battle line between her and tradition and refusing to listen to any further persuasion that will make her wait till the end of her mourning period:

OGWOMA No matter how you beat me, I will not listen to you this time (19).

Traditionally, Ogwoma is to marry the deceased husband's brother, but because she is forced to marry him at first, she sees his death as an opportunity to be free, to

assert and express herself in the midst of a tradition that mistakes the worth of a woman with her bride price in Ogwoma's society. Such levirate union makes women more vulnerable because the widows most time are at the mercy of the other wife(ves). In some West African traditions even now, the worth of female bride-price allows parents to give away their daughters to the highest bidder who in most cases is against the girl's wish. Such an issue makes women become the possession of the man they marry which makes them unassertive and inexpressive because they have been sold to the husbands unknowingly by their parents. In this African context, the issue of bride-price only reaffirms that women are stereotypes of property in societies with such practice. This is further reiterated by Ogwoma's friend, Anwasia during their discussion who reminds her about the tradition that makes a girl the source of wealth to the family which Ogwoma rejects immediately:

OGWOMA It is one who never loved who thinks that way. I pray for the past three years for my God to deliver me from this marriage. My prayers were answered and nothing can stop me this time. Let the moon turn into blood; let the rain become blood; Ogwoma loves and Ogwoma will do it again! (9-10).

Ogwoma's language shows her determined and assertive nature; she is not ready to compromise her life for the sake of culture anymore. This type of freedom is also seen in Cassie's bravery in *Bold Girls*, she exposes the true nature of the men involve in their lives which Munro portrays in her play, she plans to leave, to go have a different live for herself, a life that is free of cultural expectations from femalehood

and its limitations but her dream is cut short by her missing money which Deirdre steals from the back of Michael's picture.

Although Munro does not explain how and why the money is taken, Cassie's keeping of the money behind the picture of Michael shows that she still attributes the man figure with security and protection which may be seen as the demonstration of her vulnerability. As earlier said, this is the picture of the dead Michael which Marie also sees as the guiding angel to her and her son that allows this study to examine the writers' treatment of widowhood from different perspectives. These two writers treat their widows as the oppressed who as females are subjected to socio-cultural whims which they do not have control over except with renewed 'selves'. The way Ogwoma and Marie grow in perception, tradition and religion are different which allows a sharp contrast between the two widows. While Sofola characterises Ogwoma to be audacious from the beginning and later becomes crushed within the culture that disregards female audaciousness, Munro portrays Marie as a character who softly grows out of the oppressed situation to assert her femininity in Walker's womanish manner that allows her find answers to the unresolved questions of her illusions from the beginning of the play. Marie's womanish action differs from Ogwoma in a way that makes her see herself outside of a man at the end of the play which makes her feeds the pigeon as an alternative to the relationship with men, while Ogwoma's audacious attitude still relates to men's sexuality. This is one of the reasons Olu Obafemi identifies in *Contemporary Nigerian Theatre: Cultural Heritage and Social Vision* (1996) that most of Sofola's writings do not bring women out of their socio-cultural limitations due to the underlying beliefs in traditional orders that make these women socially moral and aesthetically worthy:

The pervading ideology in Sofola's theatre is the ideology of conformity within which the issues of the status of women in the society and cosmic harmony within the 'traditional order' are circumscribed (163).

Sofola's respect for culture is vivid in *Wedlock of the Gods*. Sofola's readers cannot alienate her belief in tradition, but can view the language she uses as an avenue to draw attention to what she describes as 'cosmic consciousness' that allows socio-cultural beliefs to supersede the treatment of the women. Different from Kolawole's earlier assertion of Sofola, Sofola ruptures the expectation underlying Walker's womanist theory in *Wedlock* as a sign of cultural allegiance to Africa's cultural traditions which shows that the play's womanist promise expires alongside Ogwoma's death as no other female character is ready to take on the fight after Ogwoma.

In contrast to Sofola's treatment of womanish females in *Wedlock*, Munro's portrayal of another female character with a womanish/assertive language and attitude is Deirdre who in her quest for identity sees that the only way to reveal the truth is through violent means which metaphorically means cutting through the web of lies and deception created by Michael. This mirrors womanist's call for more coalition solidarity as a way of embracing widespread of unity, identity and social justice.

DEIRDRE. I need a knife. A wee blade of my own. It's quieter than a gun.

You can hold it quiet in your hand. Maybe I'd like that (208).

This is what Deirdre notices outside in the street which helps her believe that she can as well do the same without any form of noise. It reveals her own way of protecting herself from any form of oppression and inhumanity which is happening in Belfast city that represents the public domain and Marie's house that represents the domestic

domain. The playwright portrays violence in the play as both real and a metaphorical act of revealing the oppressive nature of social relationships.

Metaphorically, the knife is used as a medium for the expression of truth in the play which breaks the illusion of the other bold girls. While Deirdre rends Nora's peach polyester material with the knife, she also uses it as a threat to get the truth from Marie. At this point, one also notices the act of women's distrust against one another which Munro examines in the character of Cassie who befriends Marie's husband, a situation which Adunni Joseph in her analyses of *Feminism: Against The Grain Of Patriarchy In Mariama Ba's So Long A Letter* describes that women who agree to marry the husbands of their fellow women cause 'pain, torture, anguish and despair for the affected women' (105).

Although unknown at first in Marie's case, it is later revealed through the arrival of Deirdre while she tries to trace her own identity in the dark Belfast Street which contributes to the violence inflicted on her by Michael. Violence is analysed in the characters loneliness and hopelessness that affects their psychological and physical beings; while Deirdre expresses hers through listening to the bird's song from afar, Marie expression of loneliness is noticed in her feeding of the bird to keep her a bit busy in the same way she cares for her children and her later acceptance of Deirdre upon the revelation of Deirdre's identity. The physical violence in the play is experienced by Nora who explains how her husband batters her during his life time. Munro treats Marie's widowhood with twisted circumstances that exposes the insecurity she faces at home and in the society.

In society, women are only recognised in their stereotyped relationships with men as daughters, wives and mothers which makes them the caretaker of the male gender. Widowhood is another form of defining a woman because of the emotional trauma associated with it. Emotional trauma remains one of the greatest problems of widowhood because of its vulnerability which makes women lifestyle to change from being family orientated to single orientated. Unlike Munro's depiction of Marie's loneliness to cling to Michael's pictures, Sofola's play exposes her disgust against the tradition of giving a girl in marriage because of bride-price and the tradition that allows a deceased husband's brother marry his wife as part of the custom.

ANWASIA . . . No matter how much a woman loves a man, the gods forbid
what you have done. You seem to forget that you are still in mourning.

OGWOMA I am not in mourning. Are you happy now?

ANWASIA Listen to me, people don't do things that way. You were forced
to marry Adigwu, we all know that, but this pregnancy is not a good thing
(9).

Sofola portrays Ogwoma to be relieved by the death of her husband. This is expressed in her discussion with Anwasia who can only empathise with her for being forced to marry a man who is not her choice. At the same time, Anwasia is not pleased with Ogwoma's actions because of her mother-in-law, Odibei whose evil behaviour in the society makes people get scared of her. Odibei is ready to know the cause of her son's death as she believes that such a death is unnatural and must be avenged. She accuses Ogwoma of infidelity even before the truth of her relationship with Uloko is revealed. Sofola emphasises Ogwoma's traits of beauty, assertiveness

and self-determination which makes people question her femininity and sexuality. This is expressed by one of Ogwoma's uncle:

UDO All of us have known Ogwoma from the very day she was born. We all know that she is very strong-willed. Many of us have often wondered why she did not become a man (26).

Ogwoma might be presented as a strong-willed character, but she becomes entrapped within a culture that sees her behaviour as disobedient. Walker's theory sees women with Ogwoma's ability as women who strive to reach wholesomeness like her female character in the novel *The Color Purple* (2004) as mentioned earlier where Celie her main character breaks away from the patriarchal system that hinders her ability, limits her, silences her and renders her incapable of seeing herself as being human with all the scarred memories from childhood. This makes her see the 'self' as an abused personality who is not needed in the society. Celie is abused by all the men she comes in contact with starting from her father to the husband she is betrothed to and even her step son until she meets another young woman, Shrug Avery who brings out the womanish nature within her. Walker does not make Celie regrets her action at the end of the novel like Sofola does to Ogwoma who pays the consequence of her disobedience with her life, instead Walker makes the men in her life regrets their actions after Celie is seen as a changed and redefined character in every aspect of life who is able to take charge of her autonomy.

Meanwhile Ogwoma is seen as a fallen woman by the village community. Except for Anwasia whom she sees as her confidant, no other woman, not even her mother in the play, supports her actions. Ogwoma and Anwasia's friendship corresponds with

Caroline Becker's observation in *Friendship Between Women: A Phenomenological Study of Best Friends* (1987) that as time spent together continues and each woman brings important parts of her life into the friendship, a world of shared meanings and understanding is created (65). This reveals communication as an important feature of friendship and closeness in any form of relationship which allows them to talk about personal feelings and disclose intimate information.

As a way of balancing gender vulnerability in the play, Sofola does not only allow Ogwoma to suffer for the consequence of this action, she makes Uloko as well to suffer with her since they both break the taboo unanimously within the same culture that is always protective of the male gender. This is similar to Evaristi's treatment of both genders in the previous chapter whereby they are at the mercy of their language while Sofola's characters are the mercy of their actions. Both lovers are like William Shakespeare's tragic duo, Romeo and Juliet who see nothing else apart from the love and will do anything to ensure they act on time which leads to their death. As Uloko says, "We allowed the devil to stir our destiny once but we shall not give him a second chance" (14). These two characters values, interests, fears and worlds are interwoven in the play which makes both of them pay the ultimate price expected by the gods through Odibei serving as the agent between the gods, culture and humanity.

This echoes Munro's view in *Iron* where Fay is punished for killing her husband. Although Fay refuses to tell anyone what happened between her and the husband before the murder fearing that no one would believe her story, she is seen as an outcast for murdering a man whom she claims to love. While Fay is coming to terms

with the arrival of her daughter that she has been denied of seeing since she has been in prison for what the other characters see as an horrific murder, Josie also has much to learn from her mother who has committed an offence that has denied her freedom. Munro presents Josie as a woman without the knowledge of the first eleven years of her life which Fay tries to revive. Munro portrays Fay as a manipulative woman who also possesses some psychoanalyst characterisation which helps Josie to recollect some of these past and what the father used to be to some extent, she remembers the most horrific portrayal character of a lovely man who pushes things too far with fatal consequences:

JOSIE. I've got a very clear memory of that, Dad brushing his teeth in the kitchen sink when it was still full of dirty pans and plates. And you shouted at him, and he looked at you with his mouth full of foam. And he looked like a dog you'd caught with its nose in a biscuit tin (21).

Josie's memory of her father exposes another side of the story. The reader sees the kind of relationship that exists between the two lovers as a master-servant relationship which allows the husband to always expect the wife to do the domestic work at home without any form of help. Although Fay shouts at her husband when he does something silly, but the husband does not seem to respect her opinion. This is further analysed in Fay's description of him as a "bugger and punk. Punk was his big chance. Tone deaf was an asset for punk wasn't it?" (22). Metaphorically, Munro uses his being tone deaf to expose the reason behind Fay's offence as he constantly neglects his wife's concerns.

Fay's offence is used as a resolution for her maltreatment in the play that allows her the freedom at the point she finds it difficult to cope with being neglected and being mocked by the person she loves and claims loves her in return. Walker affirms that women who are cruelly exploited, psychologically and bodily are relegated to the most narrow and confining lives which drive them to unexpected madness like that of Fay. As noticed earlier, Fay's crime can be analysed on the one hand, as a victim of circumstance and on the other hand as a culprit for murdering a fellow human being. Considering Fay as a victim of circumstance, Josie's eagerness to search for her makes readers understand the loss she feels being denied of the opportunity of seeing her mother for years. Munro portrays Josie and Fay's relationship as being ambiguous from the beginning of the play to depicts a sense of female bonding that relates to motherhood whereby Josie intends to bridge the gap that has been created between both of them. The fifteen years of losing contact and of constant denial from her paternal grandmother who is so upset with Fay's behaviour creates in Josie the zeal to change the destructive pattern of her mother's life style. However, their relationship is seen as being abusive in some ways but it creates a sense of sisterhood that reveals the sharing of a bond that ties mother and daughter no matter the age difference which seems to be absent in *Bold Girls and Wedlock of the Gods*.

In Sofola's *Song of a Maiden*, Aduke shares her daughter's pain and grief which allows her to disrespect her husband. However, like Fay's character, Yetunde refuses to be mocked; she rejects the marriage between her and Professor Oduyinka who the villagers see as a lunatic. While the marriage might have been a breakthrough for the maiden, Sofola presents Yetunde as ignorant and unable to change her mind from the beginning to the end of the play. While considering the play from this perspective, on

the other hand, Sofola also tries to avoid the issue of forced marriage which will allow Yetunde to make her own choice of man and to reject what the gods of her village say.

The playwright makes the academics look ridiculous and culturally void which allows her to present Yetunde's character as decisive and assertive in order to avoid committing a marital mistake which Ogwoma does in *Wedlock of the Gods*. Yetunde rejects the proposal by goddess Awon that she will be the one to break the barrier between illiteracy and literacy of her people because she sees no good in her marrying the academic since she sees it in line with the concept of a forced marriage that will allow her be a man's property and a man she does not know and love. Sofola presents it as a means of being sold into marital slavery, she is going to build a home but the home she wants to build is nothing compared to what she has always longed for in her life which makes Yetunde accuse her parents of parental negligence and stupidity:

YETUNDE. And you were too afraid to speak out against a mad husband
for your daughter. . . Some strangers from an unknown land
came to town acting strange and offending the gods. Ifa was
asked what should be done about it. My father and mother gave
Yetunde as a sacrifice. (10-11).

Sofola confirms Walker's exploration of the complexities of the relationships between poverty and gender oppression which is the similar to the issue is in Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa* analysed in the previous chapter. Yetunde's action shows freedom as a personal and lonely battle she needs to endure than the

fear that will make her sacrifice her ego. Giving voice to Yetunde is a form of aesthetics examination of the processes involved in cultural authorisation whereby language and authority are dramatically interlinked.

While Yetunde's accusation of her parents is similar to that of Cassie and Nora's upbringing of children, her psychological plight mirrors Marie's situation who builds a fantasy world of masculine illusions for herself even after the death of her husband. Marie becomes emotionally and psychologically emancipated after Cassie's confession of having an affair with her husband whom she so much idolises. This provokes her emotional and assertive development from an ignorant young woman whose social vulnerability allows to be captured by the masculine defect to someone who is ready to face the reality of life from a fresh perspective. Munro presents a new Marie at the end of the play; a woman who once draws her emotional and moral inspiration from the memories of her dead husband becomes so irritated that she destroys all that reminds her of him which causes her pain:

MARIE. But I've no story, haven't they told you? I know nothing at all. That's the only story I'm fit to tell you, about nothing at all . . . Except being brave and coping great and never complaining and holding the home together . . . Is that the story you're wanting?

. . .

Oh but they think I don't know how to be bitter, they think I never learned.

I'm just a wee girl with a smile that feeds the birds.

So is this the truth you wanted to rob me of? Is this what you wanted to

hear? Go you back now, go you back to your own Mother. She can tell you

how bad he was, how he lied to her; that's a better story, that's a story
that'll keep you safe from any man with a gentle smile and warm hands.

Go you back to your own place! (223-224).

Rather than seeing pain as the opposite of language according to psychoanalyst Jutta Gutwinski in *Hypochondria Versus the Relation to the Object* (1997) words, she identifies pain in relation to language as the signal and terrible feeling of being alone. This describes Marie's situation and her development of a sense of defence that gives her the confidence to face the difficult moments in the play. She gains her voice and faces the reality through her aesthetics of fear while every hidden secret behind Michael's infidelity and lies are exposed by Cassie and Deirdre, the latter of whom is considered as an outcast and who is interested in finding out who her father was. Marie realises her innocence has been wrenched which makes her become so bitter, but helps in her realisation of coming to terms with her present situation which will help her cope with it. As the end of the play, one feels that there is hope for Marie, but this is symbolised in her feeding of the birds. Readers notice how Munro portrays Marie and her acceptance of her domestic roles in order to be a good wife and mother which allows Michael to have extra marital affairs. This fantasized world is what Cassie has tried relentlessly to infringe upon as a means of exposing Michael's illicit affair. Marie is forced to break away from her belief in a false husband who is not the kind of personality she used to think he was. This ironically depicts her breaking away from her old self to explore a new form of self which allows her to be the subject of her own story rather than being the object of Michael's story. Although the men are physically absent in the play, Munro makes them ever present in every bit of discussion that she creates through her female characters. This shows that men

play a significant role in the shaping of women's life that either leaves them assertive or unassertive. Cassie reveals the whereabouts of all the men in the play through the use of irony in language which de-centres the position of men in women's lives.

While Cassie's decision to go away is thwarted by Deirdre who exposes the truth in the play, she also remains in the same unchanging position rather than putting her womanish words into action. Cassie is not the only victim in the play, but the other three bold girls are all victims of men's deception but in different ways and under different circumstances. While Marie is being deceived by her husband, Deirdre is a victim of another type of deception, the lack of recognition on the part of her father, which strips her of her identity. Although she knows who her father is, but her aim is to make everyone else find out the truth about her identity which might not be known since Michael who is suppose to give her the recognition is dead and unless she assert herself, she would continue to be a bastard in the eyes of the strict Catholic community. Deirdre has been denied identity and position in society that she feels is rightfully her own like other female characters in the play.

This is the same manner in which Nora's world revolves around motherhood, and Cassie is deceived by having false hope of escape in having an extra marital affair. Hypocrisy is also noticed in the play whereby Cassie pretends to Marie while she befriends her husband and Deirdre is tricked by her mother about her father's identity and that by taking her father's name, she will regain her own identity. The audiences observe that Munro aims to expose the patriarchal oppression upon the women in the society as well as explicitly show heroism of women, something that is unseen as it

is hidden behind the closed doors while men are out fighting, protesting, serving long prison sentences or dying.

Similarly, Ogwoma tries to do the same but her rebellious act leads to the triple tragedy at the end of the play which allows the tradition to apprehend her. Ogwoma's mother-in-law avenges the death of her son and Ogwoma's adultery by hypnotising her to swallow a poisonous concoction, while the lover Uloko, machetes her as well and then commits suicide by taking the same concoction Ogwoma drinks. These deaths show that such an adulterous act and disregards to the dead are unacceptable in the West African society. While Marie breaks away from the historical notion that gives men the dominant presence in women's life, Ogwoma is unable to do that which shows there is hierarchy involved in the interaction of her and Odibei. Although Sofola characterises Ogwoma with an assertive and determined language, Odibei plays a dominant role to preserve tradition which makes her assume the upper position in their relationship. She presents a culture that believes most death are unnatural especially the type of her son's death; Odibei believes that there is a human agent responsible for the death of her son because culturally, anybody that dies of a swollen stomach is always traceable to adultery.

The type of relationship explored by Munro in portraying Fay in relation to other people and inmates as tricky, it shows her longing for companionship. This is a situation that happens to most prisoners who are denied freedom, but tend to seek companionships amongst themselves and amongst the warders. The play exposes lots more on the psychological trauma of a prisoner (lifer) and mother-daughter relationship. Julia T. Wood in *Gendered Lives: Communication, Gender and Culture*

(2003) identifies this as “troubles talk” (124) which is a talk about troubles, or personal problems, a kind of interaction in which hurt feelings may result from the contrast between most men’s and women’s rules of communication. Owing to Fay’s explanation of what happened between her and her husband, the readers perceive there is a trouble talk between them which leads to the murder act because of Fay’s vulnerability.

Munro's play examines what theorists like Deborah Cameron in *Verbal Hygiene* (1995), Deborah Tannen in *You Just Don't Understand* (1992) refer to as ‘rapport talk’. This happens between Josie and her mother, Fay whom despite their disagreement and differences, they emphasise solidarity rather than the fight for upper place in their communication. This allows a sense of sisterhood between the mother and daughter, in which they confide in each other and open up to each other. Fay’s use of the word “like grown up ladies” (71) refers to the next discussion when her daughter visits again depicts what she thinks about her. Since she feels pleased with her action, she sees Josie as an immature child as she discusses how she wants another lawyer to take up the murder case in order to reveal the truth which Fay is totally against. While Josie reluctantly admits to her social unease and dysfunctional relationships; Fay acknowledges her ugly past and yearns for her lost sensory delight which is explored in her eating of hot chips from paper, chocolates and cigarettes.

This mother-daughter relationship conveys the isolation of a woman who remembers the moment of happiness and freedom she once shared being denied of and stolen away by her moment of madness. Fay becomes a woman confined to her own emotional solitude which she finds very difficult to discuss with any other person,

but Munro uses it to expose her motivations, her longings and her views. In the patriarchal society, she finds it easy to use self-destructive methods to anaesthetise herself by her use of drugs and food that seem to sooth her tempest from within.

As mentioned earlier, this mother-daughter sisterhood is absent in the *Wedlock's* whereby Ogwoma's mother regards her action as an abomination to the gods of the land. Despite Fay's crime and punishment, her daughter still believes she is innocent and wants people to hear her own side of the story which seems awkward to the two prison warders especially the female one who used to be close to Fay. Rather than viewing Ogwoma's action from the view of why she has done what is traditionally assumed to be wrong, her mother sees it from the perspective of culture and the embarrassment she is bringing to the family. Instead of being supportive and mothering to Ogwoma, her mother sees her actions as humiliating:

NNEKA I cannot work on the road; I cannot go to the market without
hearing whispers; I cannot swallow food without being choked . . . (39).

Nneka views Ogwoma's action from the extreme of a woman's behaviour with unquestionable repercussion of swellings from every part of the body without help from any medicine man. This is because there is the fear of being inflicted by the gods for any medicine man that takes care of a person that breaks such a taboo. Womanist aesthetics recognises that these myths and taboos are often instituted by male-dominated ideologies to subjugate women and turn them into sexualised subjects and voiceless objects who are unable to challenge their situations. Ogwoma refuses to die with her dream unfulfilled like Cassie and Nora. Nora acknowledges that she has plenty things she can say and poems in her head, but her life revolve

around her children. She is not ready to express herself since she sees no good in talking and asserting herself which can give her the identity she could have as an individual rather than within the patriarchal view of the female gender in the society she lives. This makes Nora and her daughter remain in their feign world while the two other characters accept the truth about their identities and move on to create a new herstory for themselves. Although Cassie and Nora remain in their false dreams, Marie and Deirdre proves different. Marie's self-delusion is designed to create a secluded world where she can live without any interference from anybody.

Also, Munro's depiction of the relationship between Fay and the female warder, Guard 2 at the beginning of the play shows that there is a kind of bond between them despite their differences in the society where Warder 2 is an upholder of laws and Fay is the convicted criminal. Warder 2 assumes the position of the women in the patriarchal society that has been trained to uphold tradition even though it is not what they want. The fact that Fay is a prisoner (lifer) and Guard 2 is a warder means there should be no such bond of confidence between them, but Munro exposes how the female gender could pass the boundaries that the society has put on them to achieve closeness and rapport amongst themselves in a situation of frustration. They share their joy and sadness at first but had to go apart because of Fay's distrust and insanity when she feels cheated. In her analysis of Fay's character to the male warder, Guard 1, Guard 2 expresses her affection and concern for Fay that:

GUARD 2. I'd like to make them eat their own filth. Talking to Fay was like talking to a favourite aunty though you know? I just about laid my head down on her and wept. Next thing you know I'm giving her my fags, we're sitting in

her cell when I'm on night shift drinking hot chocolate out of my flask with
a dod of whisky in it . . . (58).

Although Guard 2 confesses that Fay betrays the trust she has for her, but Fay sees it as a way of alienating herself and creating her own new identity as a lifer in the prison. The two guards symbolise the blurring of boundaries and the dehumanising effect of the prison system. Fay sees the only visible male character in the play, Guard 1 as someone who is influential, but will never help which reveals some of the masculine features in the society:

FAY. Might as well be. Cock of the walk. A fox in the henhouse. Yeah he's got
a kind face. He's nothing but kind. Surround one man in women and he
doesn't ever need to be anything but kind does he? They'll do everything
else. He can just lie back in his armchair and put his paper over his face
and be kind can't he? They'll run about clucking, being busy, being bossy,
nagging and pushing and being all the bad things he never has flex a
muscle to be . . . (65-66).

Although Munro analyses him as a well educated man and a philosopher, Fay sees no good in him since he is a man who is unhelpful in his relationship with the females. In her search of new identity, she tries to forget about her prison lifestyle while talking to her daughter, she avoid emotional and personal discussion with Josie while she tries to discuss her daughter's personal and social life which encourages and makes her forget about her own confinement for the moment. She loves to hear how successful Josie has become and the qualifications she has attained, the type of work she does and her marital relationships.

Also, Munro reveals the representation of women who are limited by their choice between a career and motherhood through these two women. Fay acknowledges that concept of motherhood as part of the fulfilment of womanhood while she tries encouraging her daughter to get a man; Josie is seen as the opposite of this opinion. Instead Josie believes in her career that she prefers to travel around because she finds it difficult to get herself a suitable man that will grant her the type of bold life she wants to live after the divorce. Despite Fay's commitment to giving herself new identity, she is unable to pretend for long before she expresses her loneliness to Josie by revealing that some of the warders do not like her.

This is also noticed in the discussion of the two warders that see her offence as dehumanising and unacceptable. This in turn affects their relationship with Josie whom they see as a guilty party, as a relative of a murderer and an accomplice of Fay's offence who crave for her mother's release and new hearing into the murder case. Sommer (2003) comments that:

The play is bathed in an aura that's gloomy and foreboding: its set is a stark steel gray and black prison visiting room with an upstage glimpse of Fay's (the mother) claustrophobic cell. . . the dominating sounds are of doors clanging shut repeatedly and with unyielding finality . . the mother and daughter's meetings are overhung, not just with the undisclosed elements of their history but the smothering presence of two prison guards who are there to prevent infractions of the "no touching" rule.

Josie's zeal to know the truth about what leads to her mother's crime leaves the audiences with an unanswered question of what actually happened between the man

she claims she still loves and misses, and the extent to which Munro explores the issue of wife abuse in the play.

One may argue that art is not an expression of emotion but its representation. Sofola and Munro's plays represent emotion employed to make art in some sense unable to escape being representational. Such is observed by Ernst Cassirer *Language and Myth* (1946) and Susanne Langer's *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (1995) where they have another view to art as a form of representation whereby art is emotion objectified in symbolic form. Cassirer extends aesthetics a priori categories so as to represent language, myth, art, religion and science as systems of symbolic forms. She thus affirms that these forms are mental shaping of experiences which are culturally determined and created by humans. As Langer identifies in his reference to music that it expresses a form of human feelings, and it creates inner lives, he therefore views that feelings are symbolically objectified in certain forms with a detail and truth that language cannot approach.

Using the above analysis to explore the aesthetics in the works of these writers, the meaning of an artwork is in its content which allows them to give their female characters assertive language through symbols that powerfully express highly significant feeling, unfolding very slowly as readers become familiar with these works. In this way, feelings and creativity occupy the central position in their works that affect readers' feelings about the assertive position of the female gender in the society.

Instead of interpreting the works of art from the object's perspective, Sofola and Munro use female assertive language as their own object of attraction which creates

more active role of viewing that assume a counterpart masculine position and a style of participation from other female characters in these plays. This is seen by Laura Mulvey in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (1989) view of phallocentrism and patriarchy that women are assigned the passive status of being looked at, whereas men are the active subjects who look.

While many women often appreciate art works, the stance they assume in the exercise reflects the ways disposed by tradition requires the donning of a masculine viewing attitude. Through this avenue, Sofola and Munro turn their dramatic works into a goal of freeing women from the oppressions of male-dominated culture which allows both writers participate in the political consciousness of representing the historic social subordination of women within the domestic and public spheres. These female protagonists disqualify Robin Lakoff's (1975) claims that women use more hedges, qualifiers and question tags than men which represent uncertainty and lack of confidence. In a sense, Lakoff's female language features are used in the plays, but such are used in the opposite way to symbolise the inspiration and to confirm self-consciousness by the female characters which allows them to assert themselves as women between different continents.

With Walker's versed knowledge that black women are different from white women historically, socially, ideologically and attitude wise, the language used by these two female writers emphasizes the view that is pro-woman, that creates female characters who make grand transitions from being victims who always needed help to the ones that can help others. To achieve this level of solidarity, Walker emphasises love amongst women in order to fight against their hindrances. In exploring the issue of

love, these female characters combine the traditional feminine communication style such as personal compassion and the use of anecdotal information with the masculine qualities such as assertiveness and instrumentality in order to be heard in the patriarchal society. Although these writers discuss some element of physical beauty like ornaments, clothes, hair do, and so on in the plays but do not dwell on it as the only means of female aesthetics but they see language as a vital means through which the female gender can be more appreciated as a being. The assertive language of these female characters is that of hope, courage, boldness and fulfilment to become self-actualised wherever they are and to see themselves as human. The feeling of being labelled as aggressive is neglected in the characters of these female protagonists and help to protest against societal injustice and oppression. As said earlier, the boldness Yetunde has at the end of the play to reject the union between her and Professor Oduyinka reveals the assertiveness of the female gender which allows the readers see her as a non-conformist.

Language in Sofola's plays is based on the conflict between female quest to assertiveness and tradition which makes her protagonists go against what tradition demands of them as a means of displaying Walker's view of female audaciousness. This often creates boldness and the wish to always venture into what the society sees as dangerous to the female gender which allows these women to place two opposite world of communication against each other to create their own assertive means of communication.

Likewise, while Munro portrays Fay as manipulative and violent in her ways, Josie is a truthful person and an accommodationist. The language between these women

reveals two different levels of communication which on the one hand is feminine and on the other hand is masculine and competing for assertion. Josie voice becomes instrumental to Fay's situation even though they fall apart at the end of the play.

Yetunde, Deirdre, Ogwoma and Fay are the opposite of the societal perception of what constitute the female gender who are regarded as woman-child. Wood (2003) identifies the concept of woman-child as a pet or a child that is cute and not taken seriously to reflect the view of women as less important, mature, competent or capable of making decisions than men. With their assertive language that tends to disrupt the masculine perspective of femininity, these four characters cannot be regarded as woman-child. As these characters become more active and assertive in their characterisation, they start to reclaim ambitions and intelligence as consistent feminine qualities against the cultural and societies wish. Although some of them are crushed within the process, but their action provoke changes in cultural expectations of womanhood.

The aesthetic of assertiveness in the analysed plays relate to the psychology of the reader which foster tense, harrowing and empathetic feelings for the female characters who are victims of their own language and behaviour. These empathetic feelings lead to the female characters sense of sisterhood. For example in *Iron*, while the guards disapprove the relationship between Fay and Josie, Munro explores the concept of sisterhood which reiterates Aduke and Yetunde's relationship, as explained earlier.

This is the same empathy Anwasia shows towards Ogwoma who goes against tradition as a means of asserting her own freedom which makes her simultaneously

the subject and object of her own experience. Ogwoma at the stage of breaking the taboo stands outside of herself in order to perceive, describe and evaluate if there is any benefit of the forced marriage. This is a moment of her life that calls for self-reflection that enables her to re-define herself and exercise some choice over who she will become with and without Uloko.

In *Bold Girls*, sisterhood is revealed at a peripheral phase which does not allow these characters to explore that feature of womanism which helps them to recognise their oppressions, articulate these oppressions to other women, and encouragement to fight the oppressions. Womanish attributes are given to three of the characters except for Nora who remains in her world of self-delusion. Although Cassie does not accept the reality at the end of the play, but her audacious characterisation unfolds the inhuman nature of the masculine gender in the play. Her assertive language shows that women can be assertive and determined to cross the boundary of their domestic sphere to move into the public sphere which she does by her action in the pub. While Cassie and Nora are in their own private world; Marie and Deirdre are also in a separate universe of exploring the public domain in their assertiveness. These two characters behaviour falls in tune with Ana Castillo's view in *Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Xicanisima* (1994) that once a woman's knowledge and experiences are shared and reaffirmed, she uses the affirmation "to strengthen herself and to share her knowledge with others. Ultimately we seek to propel ourselves into a collective state of being, which is so ancient we will consider it new" (160).

The four plays reveal a breakdown of communication amongst the female characters which hinders a moment of truth and honesty amongst them. In a keen analysis of

Fay in *Iron*, she tries to ignore her past even while her daughter is ready to get a new lawyer to start the case from afresh and to publicise her own side of the story; she feels contented with her new created world of non interference of men and people like her mother-in-law who takes away her daughter for several years without asking of her welfare. At the end of the play, Fay stops the flow of sisterhood that is between her and Josie because she refuses to give her consent to re-open her case file therefore she alienates herself more and retires to her world of loneliness. Despite the fact that Fay murdered her husband, she is still a widow whose emotion and social lifestyle changes within the society. She feels self-affirming but lonely and totally alienated. To overcome her fears, Munro makes Fay to admit to them, allows her to be truthful with herself and to have personal freedom even though she is alienated in the prison.

Sofola and Munro can be analysed from Walker's womanist theory as writers who are artistically committed to a radical restructuring of the female gender within the societies that allow for the dissolution of sex and class boundaries and also calls for social integration. Like the writers discussed in previous chapters, both writers create a sense of affirmation as the foundation through which mutual respect can be attained, established and maintained with others in the pursuance of change that will affect the female gender positively. Munro's other play, *Fugue* (1995) also dramatises the urge for change as the only opportunity for survival that is evidenced in the other two analysed plays.

These plays expose the fragmentations of woman's experience and the self-deception that arises from passive acceptance of patriarchal norms that calls for immediate

change similar to Sofola's dramatisation. Her ability to call the attention of the readers and the general society to the representation of Nigerian women in such male-dominant culture that requires an urgent change is her strategy of symbolic inclusion which gives the female characters voice and self-defined roles within her plays. However, this chapter expresses Walker's womanist analysis of the oppressed women to possess moral visions and assertiveness that grows from their oppressed situations which are considered important tools for female aesthetic empowerment.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

As one of the aims of this study has been to engage and test Walker's womanist theory to see if it could be applied meaningfully to the plays from different cultural background in relation to language use, it is observed that the analysed women writers present the problem faced by their female characters as embedded in the patriarchal system of their respective societies which determine their status and image. While womanist theory is identified as an alternative to feminist theory that gives marginalised women the opportunity to join the female discourse movement, this study discovers that female characters need to be assertive in their own way (self) in order to correct their inferiorized positions which encourages recognition and affirmation within the society.

This is observed in the works of the selected writers from the West African and Scottish continents like Zulu Sofola, Julie Okoh, Ama Ata Aidoo, Efua T. Sutherland, Rona Munro, Marcella Evaristi, Liz Lochhead and Sue Glover as explored in this study. These writers engage in human stories that often critique the political, economic, and socio-cultural involvement of their male literary counterparts which mostly support female marginalisation.

The writers subvert traditional portrayal of women as domestically bound which no longer reflects contemporary life nor the aspirations of women in either of the cultural milieus covered in this study. These women's writings have encouraged their engagements with cultural, aesthetic and social elements of in/visibility in literature

at different levels. The selected writers reject the notions of social relegation and male supremacy. Instead these writers engage in creating more positive and assertive female characters that differ from the portrayal of passive dependent female characters often displayed by earlier male and female authors and enable these characters display of worth, capacities and capabilities. This creates the sense of women's selfhood and self-identity that are presented in the plays through female characters such as Rona in *The Seal Wife*, Eriaye in *Mannequins*, Queen Elizabeth in *MQS*, and Anowa in *Anowa* amongst others. These characters have shown that women can be more resourceful, self-reliant, self-determined, and assertive than women are being portrayed by the patriarchal societies.

While this study discusses women writers from two different continents who have progressed relentlessly since they launched themselves in the public sphere of writing, the selected plays directly addresses the ways in which patriarchal system oppress women and deprive them of voice either economically, politically, socially or sexually which are being explored in the analysed plays. Through the exploration of womanist theory and the writers' use of language, these plays show that the writers have their own unique female characters who call the attention of readers to the female images, use assertive languages, express the female psyches and reflect women's cultural positions from different continents which are liable to change. Such exploration portrays the female gender with elements of self-determination, self-affirmation and self-actualization that helps to remove silence, voicelessness and patriarchal conditioning as associated with womanhood.

While this group of women found different causes and characteristics of patriarchy, many of them shared the idea that patriarchy still remains the strong cause of oppression against women through their use of unassertive and private language. This explains why some of the selected writers see patriarchy as a way of maintaining a man's social, ideological, sexual, political and economic dominance within the society. The maintenance of these patriarchal elements highlights the inferiority and second class difference of the female gender whereby patriarchy is seen as an unjust oppressive social system. Such social system present women as morally, intellectually and physically inferior to men since it limits women's ability to reproduction and domesticity.

As this study cannot argue if the writers have consciously or unconsciously put into consideration the beliefs of many women that the concept of patriarchy was needed to explain what seemed to be the universal oppression of women, they engaged with women's use of language as another dominant reality in which their muteness and invisibility is constructed. Although this concept is not all inclusive as it claimed to be since women have different backgrounds, it became clearer as the author of this study discovered they did not share the same experiences. These female characters are subject to different forms of oppression in line with similar issues, but the study could still see a universal application of patriarchy as a form of oppression which is being discussed through their use of themes, imageries and language. While the plays have typical patriarchal settings and the portrayal of the female gender in predominantly male societies, it exposes the need for women to liberate themselves from any form of repressive culture. These women writers are able to distinguish

between the public realm of politics and the private realm of the family whereby they saw the family also as avenue of oppression to womanhood.

The writers use different views of womanhood such as mother figure, communities of women, historical women characters and modern women to explore their view of femininity, the plays also analyse how they have been able to re-write the male perspective of histories to female perspective of “her-stories”. The writers have employed views like women’s position in the patriarchal society, female sexuality, male and female interactions, issues of identity, women’s expression in the private and public sphere to analyse historical and contemporary themes. While these plays discuss some of the female characters willingness and others unwillingness to change the status-quo of women in the public domain, this has allowed the author of this study to engage with the selected works from the womanist, aesthetic and sociolinguist perspective.

Although the study has not been without limitations such as choosing the topic, the continents to be used, the appropriate plays to be explored for analysis, the elements of Walker’s theory to be applied, the availability of womanist materials amongst other things, the study observes the sociolinguistic, socio-cultural and how women are perceived in two different continents. Selecting plays from the 1970s till 2008 for this study shows that although time has changed and people have moved on from different views of life, ideologies and beliefs, women’s position in the society still remains marginalised to some extent. This is explored in the writers’ works who see certain female biological determinant as being repressive and too demanding. Such is evidenced in the analysis of *The Seal Wife*, *Commedia*, *Edewede*, *Anowa*, which

show that motherhood requires choice. While Glover's Rona chooses to abandon her daughter after birth, leaving readers with an image of another female (another Island) being thrown into the unchanging tides of society, Okoh's Edewede's rejection of the custom of female circumcision has effected its change at the end of the play in order for the younger generation not to go through it. However, Okoh's play provides an alternative to the existing traditions of rite of passage without female circumcision. As these two female characters make different choices, it shows the extent at which the patriarchal system marginalises women in the society if words are not put into actions.

Nevertheless, the writers create a gender balance scenario of the patriarchal culture as mentioned earlier by capturing moments where language is not used as women's restriction alone, but also as men's. The writers have shown that both genders are oppressed by the patriarchal framework which often sees female identity as socially determined rather than biologically constructed. This is visible in plays like *Mouthpieces*, *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, *Edufa* amongst other plays whereby both genders use languages that are said to be conservative, conscious, insecure, emotional and sensitive which makes their identities invisible.

No claim is made in this study to have covered all the elements of womanist theory and texts that can be analysed with it, rather, the study have focused on how womanish language and actions can be used to reverse stereotyped behaviours through determination, mirroring and assertiveness. The underlining hypothesis that language has a positive impact on female creativity is analysed in the sixteen plays through a careful exploration of the female characters. This is due to its ability to

empower and enable female authors' freedom to think and feel which is analysed in two different categories of female creativity in this study, firstly, determined and assertive female characters and secondly, undetermined and stereotyped characters. In this first category of characters, the women writers do not see femininity as irrational and too emotional; their characters display the growing consciousness of their intellectual, emotional, sexual, economical and linguistic power. These female characters tell their own stories from their unique perspectives, therefore centralising the position of the feminine in the society. These determined and assertive female characters have the power of self-definition that disallows them to fit into the established standards of the dominant culture. Some of them engage with silence as a positive tool to see how effective it can be used to achieve their goals, deny victimhood and recognise that there is a power shift between the two genders.

In the second category of the characters, the female characters are bound by the biological and social determinants as dictated by men/society. They are female characters who adhere strictly to the societal expectations of the female gender without questioning or changing it. Although the characterisations of women in the second category are also made to strive hard in order to become a narrator of their own stories, they also pay the price by being victims of different patriarchal whips. This category of women shows that irrespective of culture, countries, classes, age groups, social backgrounds and religion all over the world, patriarchal system leaves women with emotional trauma, sometimes physical injuries, and shame of voicing their experiences to any other person which often allows them to suffer in silence.

While these plays question women's situation and their ill-treatment in the society that makes women unable to communicate with each other, they also question the acceptability of sisterhood as a global concept which they see as another form of misconception about womanhood. Although during the second wave feminism perspective, sisterhood is a term of political solidarity which speaks women's activism, the selected writers explore it as a term that cannot account for the experiences of different women. This is observed by Oyeronke Oyewunmi in *African Gender Studies* (2005) that the meaning sisterhood carries for its initiators is of shared oppression, common victimization, community of interests, solidarity and collective activism. Thus, she summarised that sisterhood is a metaphor, denoting a collectivity of experiences, and it operates at a more abstract and generalized level than the term "sister" and "brother" amongst black Americans, which are most often used on a personalised direct individual communication basis. This shows a reciprocal recognition and affirmation amongst women where they share a sense of mutual respect.

This explains why the black women see class and race respectively as their own form of oppression rather than the sexuality and gender that existed within the western and the African- American views. Fox Genovese notices in *Feminism Without Illusions* (1991) that the white middle class feminists proclaim sisterhood belongs to all women by fighting for equality with middle class men. This shows that sisterhood as it is believed by this group of feminist is not all inclusive as well, as they ignorantly strengthen class lines by making the marginalised women, singly or together with their men, go further down the socio economic scales.

While this concept of sisterhood might be less relevant to some aspect of contemporary feminism, it is explored in some of the plays such as Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods*, Okoh's *Edewede* and Glover's *Bondagers* and *The Seal Wife* that have been considered in this study. In these plays, these women writers recognise another form of sisterly bond amongst women which they agree should be reciprocal in its operation. They see this bond as an opportunity where the individuals involve gives and receives equally. Although this corresponds with Hudson-Weems' perspective that these women are joined emotionally, as they embody empathetic understanding of each other's shared experiences, plays like Lochhead's *MQS*, Aidoo's *Anowa*, Munro's *Bold Girls* depict false sisterhood. In Lochhead's *MQS*, the sisterly bond is seen as false as Queen Elizabeth is always showing superiority to Queen Mary despite being a monarch as well.

The story in Aidoo's *Anowa* is different as the sisterly bond is expected between mother and daughter but the play falls short of it. *Anowa*'s mother is not ready to support her daughter when she refuses the social traditions and norms that govern the community. This is a similar case to Munro's *Bold Girls* whereby Cassie and her mother disagrees constantly as Cassie is not willing to be treated like traditional property. Munro portrays two generation of unfulfilled lives but with Cassie having the possibility of some personal freedom, imaginative spirit and a rethinking of the patriarchal society. Analyses of these three plays show a high level of false sisterhood as something that is not always attainable and neither can it be forced.

The female characters in these plays compete with each other as different perceptions and reality around them forced them to. The characterisations of Bharo, Queen

Elizabeth, Ebikere and Cassie show a form of false sisterhood through the acts of injustice, inhumanity and general subjugation that women impose upon other women in many societies. The women writers present these female characters as people the society has given limited possibilities to change which often make them traditionally bound. Although, Queen Elizabeth's characterisation takes an active involvement in the suppression of the other female monarch while trying to maintain her masculine role in a determined and assertive way, it is different from that of Ebikere and Bharo who are passively involved in other women's powerlessness.

While the concept of sisterhood seems abstract to most of these writers, it creates a sense of closeness and connection for the female characters that portray sisterhood in their collaborative effort of yearning for change. This is seen in Okoh's *Edewede* where the other younger generation of women join Edewede in her fight against tradition and the older generation of women who are the upholders of the barbaric tradition. While the younger generation of female characters are no longer interested with simply expressing their experiences as individuals, they try to present their experiences in a coordinated account as a group of women with common situations. Therefore, these younger mothers create in the mind of their daughters the desire for knowledge, the love for autonomy, the spirit for competition, fearlessness and enterprising spirit which negates the psychoanalysis perspective they have been brought up with. All of the analysed writers have disregarded the psychoanalysis theory that makes women subordinate and uncompetitive through their female characters that question different positions women are relegated to. This is what Walker explores as womanish act; this invariably corrects certain mothers and

cultural beliefs that expect women's repression of sexuality, feminine passivity and dependence, docile role acceptance which they conform to.

The approach shows that assertiveness is more a mental attitude than linguistic practice, hence it allows the female characters to become empowered when they realise that language influences perceptions of men and women, masculinity and femininity. As the study engages with language, themes and plots that show the issues affecting women, the writers' portrayal of the female characters help to build the confidence needed in women and to allow the men see the value of women in the patriarchal society. Aesthetic of assertiveness shows that as these writers engage in creating dramatic works that centre on female characters who disabuses the idea that women are more conservative than men.

The issue of sexualisation and engendering has been taken into account in order to understand the socio-cultural importance in the history of both genders. This has helped to answer the feminist question of how sociolinguistic theory interlinks with the social forms of gender oppression through the psychological experiences of women. From the feminist sociolinguistic perspective of language, the nature, origins and usages are examined with the women users in mind which helps to observe the relationship between the language user and the language itself, history and politics behind the language. The observations that language is influenced by culture and tradition are important issues that have led to many research projects which have not ignored cultural theory. Thus, cultural theory relates to the heuristic concepts of culture; it concentrates on how a particular phenomenon relates to matters of ideology, nationality, social class, ethnicity and gender. For example, this study

reveals Sofola has an outstanding cultural and political voice in West African drama which allows her work to probe various ideological and political issues superimposed on the Nigerian people.

This study identifies that while the writers provide answers to who the female characters are in the plays, what their social and historical circumstances are, how powerful and powerless they are, and how they control the world around them, it also presents different characterisations that show the limitations, strength, voicelessness and audacity women go through during their life time. The use of language in the plays reveal the dogmatic views that are coercive, oppressive, enslaving and dehumanising within cultural heritages which are instrumental to the treatment of women. Hence, female creativity is being encouraged as an attempt to reject the acceptance of laws, religious teachings, doctrines, traditions, social injustice that objectify women since language and gender can hardly be separated.

The selected eight writers display a remarkable ability to manipulate language with clarity. Their notion of personal freedom and interrelatedness with others help their female characters create the moods, feelings and impression that pass the messages across to readers. Their language use corrects the impression that language objectifies women, that women have no desires and should not be heard in the society which celebrates men's autonomy and women's vulnerability. While the plays engage in the rural and urban societal constraints, the plays show the need for effective communication as a way of bridging the gap between women and men within the society. In Elaine Showalter's *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830–1980* (1985), she observes that it is not language that silences

women in the society but the restriction placed on women's ability or entitlement to use it:

The appropriate task for feminist criticism is to concentrate on women's access to language. . . on the ideological and cultural determinants of expression. The problem is not that language is insufficient to express women's consciousness but that women have been denied the full resources of language and have been forced into silence, euphemism and circumlocution (193).

However, the use of positive, creative language by these writers enables their female characters to redefine themselves in the society that has limited their ability in history especially in the public sphere where very little is known about women. Showalter shows that men have been privileged to be the shapers of cultural forms which include language as the most symbolical of all that has excluded women in the production of cultural forms. Her discussion about female writings corresponds with the selected writers' exploration as a call to female writers to explore the positive aspect of women's cultural position, women's language, women's body and women's psyche through their language.

Invariably, this becomes a means of escape for them rather than dwelling on the hierarchical and stereotyped nature that has been identified with women in the society. In Showalter's words, the women writers have found themselves, in a sense, without a history and have been forced to rediscover the past anew, forging constantly and consciously into their sex roles that make them very valuable to female literary history. The female writers through their works create determined female characters with roles and situations to help assert their existence in time and history as said earlier. This also corrects the inferiorization Lakoff (1973, 1974) talks

about in use of women's language which are subservient, polite and full of question tags. While writing is also an avenue of empowerment of some sort for women since it enables the female writer to confront all forces threatening to silence her negatively, it also becomes building and rebuilding the dented images. This shows in the works of selected writers whose writings are like confessions of writing by impulse to change the status quo, to interrogate patriarchy, imperialism and western feminism and hierarchy that involve sexist language.

Another issue that was explored in this study is the use of positive sexist language. The writers elaborate through their female characters that sexist words should not just be considered as something that defines, demeans or depreciates women, or that make them invisible, passive or silent, sexism in language can redefine women to inspire resistance and activeness in any socio-cultural milieu. While this mirrors Julia Penelope's belief's in *Speaking Freely: Unlearning the lies of the Father Tongue* (1990) that the early encounters women had with sexist language from St Hildegard of Brigen in the eleventh century is an attempt to construct an alternative to non-sexist language, it also shows that sexist language can be used as a means of advocating for cultural change with the self-willed attitude amongst women.

Although this study intended to apply Walker's womanism in relation to language use, it has discovered that the selected plays only have some elements of womanist theory which makes the theory not to be universal as Walker's definition claimed it to be. On the one hand, there are elements like audaciousness, capability and female creativity that can be applied beyond African and African-American societies, elements like incorporating men into women's life, communal living, nurturing,

sisterhood which cannot be applied. As sisterhood is often a problematic concept in any culture, what is seen as sisterhood in Walker's womanism can be a form of assertiveness whereby stronger female characters try to imprint their ideas and beliefs on the weaker ones. At the end of the analysis, womanism is seen as a theory that is all about survival. Although this is explored in the works of the selected writers who use socio-cultural conflicts to draw the readers' attention to female issues and sisterhood as a sense of fellowship, this fellowship is drawn upon by aesthetic of assertiveness which explore more on the possibility of women changing things for themselves, giving another reading to tradition and enriching the author's understanding of the selected plays.

Apart from Walker's view of audaciousness among females, this study has come up with aesthetic of assertiveness which allows women to see sense in their actions, autonomy and words that help them to break away from any form of silence which demeans them. While they engage in the questioning of their present positions, they expose the social attitudes that violate their woman and human rights. Aesthetic of assertiveness encourages these writers to create female characters who use the inter-personal and extra-personal skills with confidence as they fight oppositions. These writers remain significant women writers who challenge their readers to acknowledge the issues of identity, oppression and gender in relation to language. The analyses of the plays show that women are oppressed in different ways due to their diverse classes, cultures and races.

These selected Scottish writers write to explore the inclusion and exclusion of women from the community narrative domain. The four writers in this study have

been able to share common interests and identities as a way of expressing their disillusionment and marginalisation. Plays like Munro's *Bold Girls*, Glover's *Bondagers*, Lochhead's *MQS* and Evaristi's *Mouthpieces* have shown the exploitations and limitations of the Scottish women, they are plays that have reset the role of women in history and in contemporary times. Their language uses have seen to the structuring and ordering of different experiences, knowledge, expectations and status to address gender oppression and psychological bondage.

This same view is also put to test in the West African community where the selected women writers clearly advocate for the eradication of the existing traditions that oppress, degrades, exploit and endanger women. These writers show that they are motivated to write in order to change and interrogate patriarchy, imperialism, culture and femininity which are closely related to the desire to be the spokesperson for their gender. Sofola, Okoh, Aidoo and Sutherland show that women have been excluded from the production of cultural forms, their female characters' use of assertive language can be used as a way of liberating women and giving them a positive self-perception as a pathway to autonomy.

However, while this study has fulfilled the aims identified and also contributed to both the development of future approaches to womanism in relation to sociolinguistic view in and beyond the shores of Africa and Africa-American societies, the study has provided a theoretical and analytical framework on which to build on this original research. As this has not been done before, other element that have not been used in this study may be useful in other women's plays within and beyond these shores as a

way of contributing to female discourse from Walker's marginalised perspective and in the aesthetics of assertiveness in female characterisations.

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